

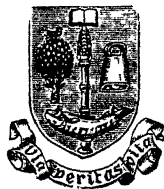
# THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939

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*by*

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E. M. F.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
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THE subject I am submitting is the development of prose during the last quarter of a century. I shall not be concerned with this or that author, nor shall I offer a list of authors. Various writers will be mentioned by way of illustration, and others whose names have been omitted will occur to you. But our main object is to consider the general trends in prose during the period.

It is a period between two wars—the Long Week-End it has been called—and many of the books published in it bear traces of this. They look backward—like Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*—and try to record the tragedy of the past, or they look forward and try to avert or explain the disaster which overtook Europe in the thirties. And even when they are not directly about a war—like the works of Lytton Strachey or Joyce or Virginia Woolf—they still display unrest or disillusionment or anxiety, they are still the products of a civilisation which feels itself insecure. The French lady, Madame de Sevigné, writing letters during the wars of the late seventeenth century, can feel tranquil. The English lady, Jane Austen, writing novels in the Napoleonic wars, can feel tranquil. Those wars were not total. But no one can write during or between our wars and escape

their influence. There, then, is one obvious characteristic of our prose. It is the product of people who have war on their mind. They need not be gloomy or hysterical—often they are gay and sane and brave—but if they have any sensitiveness they must realise what a mess the world is in, and if they have no sensitiveness they will not be worth reading.

So that is the first point: the long week-end between. Secondly, we can conveniently divide the week-end into two periods—the 1920's and the 1930's. The division is not hard and fast, still it is helpful. The 20's react after a war and recede from it, the 30's are apprehensive of a war and are carried towards it. The 20's want to enjoy life and to understand it: the 30's also want to understand but for a special purpose: to preserve civilisation. They are less detached. In her little book *Life among the English* Miss Rose Macaulay contrasts the two periods neatly:

'The twenties were, as decades go, a good decade: gay, decorative, intelligent, extravagant, cultured. There were booms in photography, Sunday films and theatre clubs, surrealism, steel furniture, faintly obscure poetry, Proust, James Joyce, dancing, rink skating, large paintings on walls of rooms.

The next decade was more serious, less cultured, less aesthetic, more political. The slump blew like a cold draught at its birth, war stories like forest fire at its close: between these two catastrophies Communists and Fascists battled and preached, and eyes turned apprehensively across the North Sea towards an alarming menace which had

leaped up like a strident jack-in-the-box from a beer-cellar to more than a throne.<sup>1</sup>

Rose Macaulay writes cheerfully and dispersedly, but she is a wise guide, tolerant, generous-minded, liberal, courageous, and her judgements of society and social values are always sound. She sums up the two decades very well.

But of course there is more to say. There are influences in this world more powerful than either peace or war. And we cannot get a true idea of our period and the books it produces until we look deeper than fashions or politics or the achievements and failures of generals. For one thing, there is a huge economic movement which has been taking the whole world, Great Britain included, from agriculture towards industrialism. That began about 150 years ago, but since 1918 it has accelerated to an enormous speed, bringing all sorts of changes into national and personal life. It has meant organisation and plans and the boosting of the community. It has meant the destruction of feudalism and relationships based on the land, it has meant the transference of power from the aristocrat to the bureaucrat and the manager and the technician. Perhaps it will mean democracy, but it has not meant it yet, and personally I hate it. So I imagine do most writers, however loyally they try to sing its praises and to hymn the machine. But however much we detest this economic shift we have to recognise it as a very important influence,

<sup>1</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Life among the English*, p. 46.

more important than any local peace or war, which is going on all the time and transforming our outlooks. It rests on applied science, and as long as science is applied it will continue. Even when a writer seems to escape it—like T. E. Lawrence—he is conditioned by it. T. E. Lawrence hated the progress of industrialism, he hated what your city of Glasgow and my city of London stand for. He fled from it into the deserts of Arabia and the last of the romantic wars, in the search of old-time adventure, and later on into the deserts of his own heart. I think he was right to fly, because I believe that a writer's duty often exceeds any duty he owes to society, and that he often ought to lead a forlorn retreat. But of course the flight failed. Industrialism did T. E. Lawrence in in the long run, and it was not by the spear of an Arab but by a high-power motor bike that he came to his death.<sup>1</sup> We must face the unpleasant truths that normal life today is a life in factories and offices, that even war has evolved from an adventure into a business, that even farming has become scientific, that insurance has taken the place of charity, that status has given way to contract. You will see how disquieting all this is to writers, who love, and ought to love, beauty and charm and the passage of the seasons, and generous impulses, and the tradition of their craft. And you will appreciate how lost some of them have been feeling during the last quarter of a century, and how they have been tempted to nostalgia like

<sup>1</sup> See Christopher Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture*, 1938; a brilliant criticism of the period from a communist standpoint.

Siegfried Sassoon, or to disgust like Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene.

But this economic movement, from the land to the factory, is not the only great movement which has gathered strength during our period. There has been a psychological movement, about which I am more enthusiastic. Man is beginning to understand himself better and to explore his own contradictions. This exploration is conveniently connected with the awful name of Freud, but it is not so much in Freud as in the air. It has brought a great enrichment to the art of fiction. It has given subtleties and depths to the portrayal of human nature. The presence in all of us of the subconscious, the occasional existence of the split personality, the persistence of the irrational especially in people who pride themselves on their reasonableness, the importance of dreams and the prevalence of day-dreaming—here are some of the points which novelists have seized on and which have not been ignored by historians. This psychology is not new, but it has newly risen to the surface. Shakespeare was subconsciously aware of the subconscious—so were Emily Brontë, Hermann Melville and others. But conscious knowledge of it only comes at the beginning of the century, with Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, and only becomes general after 1918—partly owing to Freud. It gathers strength now, like the economic movement, and, like it, is independent of war or peace. Of course, writers can be stupid about it, as about anything else, they can apply it as a formula instead of feeling it as a

possibility; the stupid psychologist who applies his (or her) formula in season or out and is always saying 'you think you don't but you do' or 'you think you do but you don't' can be absolutely maddening. But the better minds of our age—what a rich harvest they have reaped! Proust in France to begin with; Gertrude Stein and her experiments in uninhibited talk—not too successful in her own case but influential—Dorothy Richardson's novels, another pioneer in this country: the later work of D. H. Lawrence, the novels of Virginia Woolf, Joyce, de la Mare, Elizabeth Bowen. History too has profited. This new method of examining the human individual has helped to reinterpret the past. Aldous Huxley's *Grey Eminence* is one example—it gives a fresh view of Cardinal Richelieu and his adviser Father Joseph—a fresh view of their insides. Livingstone Lowes' *The Road to Xanadu* is another example: a fresh view of the genius and make-up of Coleridge. And then—very important—there is the great novel of a Christian historian, Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, which regards history as a record of what men think and feel as well as of what they assert and achieve, and tries, with this extra material to account for the rise and fall of civilisations. Professor Toynbee comes to the conclusion that they rise and fall in accord with a religious law, and that except the Lord build the house their labour is but lost that build it; or, if you prefer the language of Freud to that of the Old Testament, that the conscious must be satisfactorily based on the subconscious.

So though we are justified in thinking of our period as an interval between two wars we must remember that it forms part of larger movements where wars become insignificant: part of an economic movement from agriculture to industrialism, and of a psychological movement which is reinterpreting human nature. Both these movements have been speeded up, and writers have in my judgement been worried by the economic shift but stimulated by the psychological. Remember too, in passing, another factor, and that is the shift in physics exemplified by the work of Einstein. Can literary men understand Einstein? Of course they cannot—even less than they can understand Freud. But the idea of relativity has got into the air and has favoured certain tendencies in novels. Absolute good and evil, as in Dickens, are seldom presented. A character becomes good or evil in relation to some other character or to a situation which may itself change. You can't measure people up, because the yard-measure itself keeps altering its length. The best exponent of relativity in literature known to me is Proust, though there are instances in English too. Most of Proust's people are odious, yet you cannot have the comfort of writing any of them off as bad. Given the circumstances, even the most odious of them all, Madame Verdurin, can behave nobly. Proust and others have this attitude—not because they know anything about science, but because the idea of relativity, like the idea of the subconscious self, has got about and tinged their outlook.

A word must now be said on the special character of prose. Prose, unlike poetry, does two things. It serves us in daily life and it creates works of art. For instance, I travelled from Euston to Glasgow on prose, I am talking prose now, and, like M. Jourdain, I am astonished at finding myself doing so. For prose, besides serving our practical ends, also makes great literature.

Now, one of the problems which a critic has to tackle is that these two uses of prose are not watertight, and one of these is as it were constantly slopping over into the other. The practical popular prose is always getting into the deliberate artistic prose which makes books. Indeed, if it didn't, the artistic prose couldn't live very long as it would get stale and stuffy. It has to be replenished by contemporary speech. And in this period of ours there has been a great deal of this replenishment. New words and phrases—and, what is more important, the new habits of thought expressed by them—are rapidly absorbed by authors and put into books. That is one tendency of our period, and it may be called, for want of a better word, the popular tendency. The writer feels himself part of his people. He enters or wants to enter into their ways. And he wants to be understood by them, and so he tries to be informal and clear. I'll give several examples of it. Here is a little example, taken from letter-writing. In 1918, if I had had a letter from a stranger it would certainly have begun 'Dear Sir'. Today, if I have a letter from a stranger, it will probably begin 'Dear Mr. Forster'. One form of

address doesn't mean more than another but the convention is a more friendly one. I expect it came in, like other speak-easies, from America. It shows which way the wind of words is blowing. Another sign is the speeches of public men. Public men are becoming less formal—some of them because of the influences of the radio, for they know if they broadcast too pompously listeners will switch off. Others are informal by instinct, like Winston Churchill, whose speeches sound and read more democratic than those of the Prime Ministers of the last war. Novelists too—they practise the friendly unpatronising tone; Christopher Isherwood's *Mr. Norris changes Trains* is an example of this. Isherwood—who is extremely intelligent—always writes as if the reader were equally intelligent. He is an example of democratic good manners. He trusts his public. Another novelist—Ernest Hemingway—introduces a new technique of conversation. Another straw which shows which way this wind is blowing is the tendency of official notices and proclamations to become more intelligible. They do so reluctantly, for the bureaucrat who gives his meaning clearly is rather afraid he may be giving something else away too. Still they do it. Under the lash of Mr. A. P. Herbert they do it. They tend to issue orders which we understand. And since we live under orders, this is a good thing.

I could continue this list of the popular tendencies in prose. We have had an example in the demand from high quarters for Basic English—and I expect it is a useful commercial idea though

I cannot see what it has to do with literature, or what it can do to literature, except impoverish it. I'll conclude with an example of another kind, a reference to the English of the Authorised Version of the Bible. This, the great monument of our seventeenth-century speech, has constantly influenced our talk and writing for the last 300 years. Its rhythm, its atmosphere, its turns of phrase, belonged to our people and overflowed into our books. Bunyan, Johnson, Blake, George Eliot, all echo it. Well, about ten years ago an edition of the Bible came out called *The Bible designed to be read as Literature*. Its publication gave some of us a shock. It caused some of us to realise that the English of the Authorised Version had at last become remote from popular English. This was very well put in a review by Somerset Maugham. The English of the Bible, he agreed, is part of our national heritage, but it is so alien to our present idiom that no writer can study it profitably. I shall soon be quoting from a writer who has studied it, still Somerset Maugham is right on the whole, and there is now an unbridgable gulf between ourselves and the Authorised Version as regards style, and the gulf widened about 1920, when those other influences we have discussed became strong. Quotations from the Bible still occur, but they support my contention: they are usually conventional and insensitive, and introduced because the author or speaker wants to be impressive without taking trouble. Listen to the following advertisement of Cable and Wireless in *The Times*. The advertise-

ment reports a speech made by a cabinet minister, Colonel Oliver Stanley, at a Cable and Wireless staff lunch:

‘When the end comes, when victory is won, then history will begin to assess merit. We shall all of us be searching our conscience. . . . We shall be discussing who succeeded and who failed . . . I have no doubt at all, when we come to discuss the part that Cable and Wireless has played, what the verdict of the nation will be—“Well done thou good and faithful servant”.’<sup>1</sup>

No doubt Cable and Wireless has done and deserved well, but I do not feel it can be suitably congratulated in the words of St. Matthew’s Gospel, and if the English of the Bible had been in Colonel Stanley’s blood instead of in his cliché-box I do not think he would have used such words. It is an example of insensitiveness to the Authorised Version and of the complete divorce between Biblical and popular English. A similar example, this time of insensitiveness to Milton, was the slogan ‘They also serve’ on a war-workers’ poster.

So much for this popular tendency in prose. I have suggested that it takes various forms, bringing freshness and informality and new usages and democratic good manners into literature, but also bringing vulgarity and flatness. Now for the other tendency to which I will attach the name esoteric; the desire on the part of writers—generally the more distinguished writers—to create something better than the bloodshed and dulness which have been creeping together

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, July 28th, 1943.

over the world. Such writers are often censured. You may complain that Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and T. E. Lawrence have done little to hearten us up. But you must admit they were the leading writers of our age. It is an age that couldn't produce a Shakespeare or even a Madame de Sevigné or a Jane Austen: an age in which sensitive people could not feel comfortable, and were driven to seek inner compensation: an age similar in some ways to that which caused St Augustine to write *The City of God*. St Augustine, though he looked outside him, worked within. He too was esoteric. The writers I've named look outside them and find their material lying about in the world. But they arrange it and re-create it within, temporarily sheltered from the pitiless blasts and the fog.

A further word on T. E. Lawrence. *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is a most enigmatic book. Lawrence made good in the world of action and was what most of us regard as a hero—brave, selfless, modest, and kind by nature yet ruthless at need, loyal and the inspirer of loyalty, magnetic, a born leader of men, and victorious at Damascus in the last of the picturesque wars. Such a man, even if not happy, will surely be true to type. He will remain the man of action, the extrovert. But when we read the *Seven Pillars* we find beneath the gallant fighting and the brilliant description of scenery—sensitiveness, introspection, doubt, disgust at the material world. It is the book of a man who cannot fit in with 20th century civilisation, and loves the half-savage Arabs

because they challenge it. This comes out in the following quotation: note in the final sentence the hit at 'vested things'; at the innate commercialism of the west which ruined the peace of Versailles.

' Their mind [the Arabs,] was strange and dark, full of depressions and exaltations, lacking in rule, but with more of ardour and more fertile in belief than any other in the world. They were a people of starts, for whom the abstract was the strongest motive, the process of infinite courage and variety, and the end nothing. They were as unstable as water, and like water would perhaps finally prevail. Since the dawn of life, in successive waves, they had been dashing themselves against the coasts of flesh. Each wave was broken, but, like the sea, wore away ever so little of the granite on which it failed, and some day, ages yet, might roll unchecked over the place where the material world had been, and God would move over the face of those waters. One such wave (and not the least) I raised and rolled before the breath of an idea till it reached its crest, and toppled over and fell at Damascus. The wash of this wave, thrown back by the resistance of vested things, will provide the matter of the following wave, when in fullness of time the sea shall be raised once more.'<sup>1</sup>

• The *Seven Pillars* for all its greatness is too strange a book to be typical of a period, and the same applies to another curious masterpiece, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. For a typical example I'd take Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*. This is important for several reasons. It came out at the beginning of our period (1921), it is an achievement of genius, and it has revolutionised the art of biography.

<sup>1</sup> *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 17.

Strachey did debunk of course; he hated pomposity, hypocrisy and muddle-headedness, he mistrusted inflated reputations, and was clever at puncturing them, and he found in the Victorian age, which had taken itself very, very seriously, a tempting target for his barbed arrows. But he was much more than a debunker. He did what no biographer had done before : he managed to get inside his subject. Earlier biographers, like Macaulay and Carlyle, had produced fine and convincing pictures of people; Lytton Strachey makes his people move; they are alive, like characters in a novel: he constructs or rather reconstructs them from within. Sometimes he got them wrong; his presentation of General Gordon has been questioned, so has his brilliant later work on Elizabeth and Essex. But even when they are wrong they seem alive, and in the *Queen Victoria* his facts haven't been seriously challenged; and, based on dry documents, a whole society and its inhabitants rise from the grave, and walk about. That was his great contribution. He was a historian who worked from within, and constructed out of the bones of the past something more real and more satisfactory than the chaos surrounding him. He is typical of our period, and particularly of the 20's—throughout them his influence is enormous; to-day it has declined, partly because people are again taking themselves very very seriously, and don't like the human race being laughed at, partly because Strachey had some tiresome imitators, who have brought his method into discredit. However that doesn't matter. Reputations

always will go up and down. What matters is good work, and *Queen Victoria* is a masterpiece. It is a pageant of the historical type, but as the grand procession passes we—you and I: we little readers—are somehow inside the procession, we mingle unobserved with royalty and statesmen and courtiers and underlings, and hear their unspoken thoughts.

Even a frivolous passage, like the one about the Boy Jones, has its historical function. Lytton Strachey was a gay person who loved fun and nonsense, and he knew how to make use of them in his work. Through the episode of the enigmatic Boy Jones, an undersized youth who repeatedly entered Buckingham Palace and hid there in the year 1840, was discovered under sofas, and confessed that he had 'helped himself to soup and other eatables, sat upon the throne seen the Queen, and heard the Princess Royal squall', Strachey recreates the domestic confusion existing there, and makes the period come alive. Then he passes on to more serious topics.

What was he serious about? Not about political ideals or solid reform. Like T. E. Lawrence, he was disillusioned though in another way. He believed, however, in wit and aristocratic good manners, and he was implacable in his pursuit of truth. He believed, furthermore, in fidelity between human beings. There, and there only, the warmth of his heart comes out. He is always moved by constant affection, and the Queen's love for the Prince Consort, and for his memory, makes the book glow and preserves it from frigidity. I want to

stress Strachey's belief in affection, as well as his fondness for fun; two points too often forgotten. And I'll read now the famous passage describing the Queen's death, with which the book closes. He begins by being the dignified historian; then he dismisses his subject tenderly, and launches the Queen as it were on an ebbing tide, carrying her backwards through the manifold joys of life till she vanishes in the mists of her birth.

' By the end of the year the last remains of her ebbing strength had almost deserted her; and through the early days of the opening century it was clear that her dwindling forces were kept together only by an effort of will. On January 14, she had at Osborne an hour's interview with Lord Roberts, who had returned victorious from South Africa a few days before. She inquired with acute anxiety into all the details of the war; she appeared to sustain the exertion successfully; but, when the audience was over, there was a collapse. On the following day her medical attendants recognised that her state was hopeless; and yet, for two days more, the indomitable spirit fought on; for two days more she discharged the duties of a Queen of England. But after that there was an end of working; and then, and not till then, did the last optimism of those about her break down. The brain was failing, and life was gently slipping away. Her family gathered round her; for a little more she lingered, speechless and apparently insensible; and, on January 22, 1901, she died.

When two days previously, the news of the approaching end had been made public, astonished grief had swept over the country. It appeared as if some monstrous reversal of the course of nature was about to take place. The vast majority of her subjects had never known a time when

Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them. She had become an indissoluble part of their whole scheme of things, and that they were about to lose her appeared a scarcely possible thought. She herself, as she lay blind and silent, seemed to those who watched her to be divested of all thinking—to have glided already, unawares, into oblivion. Yet, perhaps, in the secret chambers of consciousness, she had her thoughts, too. Perhaps her fading mind called up once more the shadows of the past to float before it, and retraced, for the last time, the vanished visions of that long history—passing back and back, through the cloud of years, to older and ever older memories—to the spring woods at Osborne, so full of primroses for Lord Beaconsfield—to Lord Palmerston's queer clothes and high demeanour, and Albert's face under the green lamp, and Albert's first stag at Balmoral, and Albert in his blue and silver uniform, and the Baron coming in through a doorway, and Lord M. dreaming at Windsor with the rooks cawing in the elm-trees, and the Archbishop of Canterbury on his knees in the dawn, and the old King's turkey-cock ejaculations, and Uncle Leopold's soft voice at Claremont, and Lehzen with the globes, and her mother's feathers sweeping down towards her, and a great old repeater-watch of her father's in its tortoise-shell case, and a yellow rug, and some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin, and the trees and the grass at Kensington.<sup>1</sup>

You'll remember what I said before about the new psychology being in the air, and I think you'll agree that this last long lovely drifting sentence, with its imaginings of the subconscious, couldn't have been created at an earlier date.

A word on the authors whom I have mentioned

<sup>1</sup> *Queen Victoria* (*Phoenix Library edition*), pp. 268-9.

or quoted. I have kept to those who may be said to belong to our period, who were formed by it, and received its peculiar stamp. Authors like Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy, Wells, Belloc, Chesterton, Frank Swinnerton, Norman Douglas, Bertrand Russell, Lowes Dickinson, George Moore, Max Beerbohm, did good work after 1920, and some of them are still active. But they got their impressions and formed their attitudes in an earlier period, before the first of the two world-wars. D. H. Lawrence presents a special difficulty. Does he come in or not? His finest novels, *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers* were published round about 1912 and he displays all his life a blend of vision and vituperation which seem to date him further back still—right back to Carlyle. On the other hand, he was alive to the new economics and the new psychology, and well aware, when he died in 1930, that the war to end war had ended nothing but the Victorian peace. My own feeling is that he does come into our survey.

To sum up my remarks. Our period: a long week-end between two wars. Economic and psychological changes already in existence intensify. Writers are intimidated by the economic changes but stimulated by the psychological. Prose, because it is a medium for daily life as well as for literature, is particularly sensitive to what is going on, and two tendencies can be noted: the popular, which absorbs what is passing, and secondly, the esoteric, which rejects it, and tries to create through art something more valuable than monotony and bloodshed.

The best work of the period has this esoteric tendency. T. E. Lawrence, though heroic in action, retreats into the desert to act. Lytton Strachy is disillusioned—except about truth and human affection.

As for assessing the value of our period, I'm disposed thus to place it high, and I do not agree with those numerous critics who condemn it as a failure, and scold mankind for enjoying itself too much in the 20's and for theorising too much in the 30's. We are plunged in a terrific war, and our literary judgements are not at their best. All our criticism is or ought to be tentative. And tentatively I suggest that the long week-end did valuable work, and I ask you to pause for a moment before you yield to the prevalent tendency to censure it.

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EARLY SCOTCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
THE UNITED STATES



# Early Scotch Contributions to the United States

*Being a Lecture delivered within the  
University of Glasgow on  
8th March, 1945*

*by*

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## EARLY SCOTCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNITED STATES

It is an especial pleasure to be with you today to discuss early Scotch contributions to the United States, because the two places with which I have been most intimately associated throughout life, the State of Virginia and Princeton University, are the two which most of all are indebted to Scotland and especially to Glasgow. Virginia profited greatly from the enterprise and business ability of your tobacco merchants; Princeton drew its religious, and to some extent its educational, inspiration from you.

The United States owes its civilization to Europe. It was Europe which gave America its blood, its language, its political institutions, its system of education, its literature and art, the Christian religion. It is true that America itself, its soil, climate, harbours, rivers, mountains, has modified and reshaped all that the Old World contributed, but the roots of her very being go back to Westminster Hall, to Oxford and Cambridge, to Canterbury, to the English manor, to the agricultural village of the Rhine Palatinate, to the Swiss mountains, to Belfast, and by no means least, to Scotland, to the Highlands, to Edinburgh, here to Glasgow. Your Scotland, through her emigrants to American soil, among them men of distinction and power of leadership, has had a most important share in moulding the nation, has contributed richly to religion, government, education and commerce. In the vast amal-

gam which is the United States, the strain of Scotch sturdiness, piety, enlightenment and honesty is still strong.

The Scots did not wait for the Act of Union to avail themselves of the opportunities offered to newcomers by the English colonies. They were aware that thousands had gone over from England, some to better their economic condition in a land where labour was dear and natural resources abundant, some to escape religious persecution or to try experiments in governments founded on religious concepts, and reports had come back of the prosperity and the privileges they enjoyed there. So when, upon the death of Sir George Carteret, several prominent Scots purchased each a part interest in his proprietorship of East Jersey, there followed an active migration to that province.

Realizing that their investment would yield but meagre returns without a larger population, the proprietors proceeded to advertise their province by means of pamphlets describing in glowing colours its rich soil and mild climate, and inviting all who would to enjoy them. One of their publications, written by George Scot and entitled *The Model Government of East New Jersey; and Encouragement for Such as Design to be Being Concerned There*, assumed the proportions of a book.

The time was propitious. The Covenanters, who had risen in arms against Charles II, had just been defeated at Bothwell Bridge and were now suffering the penalty. The Duke of York, sent by his brother to rule Scotland, adopted a policy of repression.

To take the Covenant was treason, to attend a conventicle was punishable with death. So, many turned eagerly to America as a refuge. And the King permitted them to go. It must be said of the Stuart monarchs that while the French kings were holding closed to heretics the gates of Canada, they threw wide open those of British America to all who would make good settlers, to Puritans, Catholics and Quakers, as well as to the Covenanters. George Scot, himself, was released from prison so that he could lead one of the expeditions to East Jersey.

The emigrants were the more ready to go because of hard times in Scotland. 'It is generally known how hardly the husbandmen do live here and with how much toil and difficulty they are able to pay their rents and have any comfortable livelihood', the proprietors stated in one of their pamphlets. This it was which had drawn off so many sturdy men into the three Scottish regiments in Flanders and into the Douglas regiment in France. Scot says that at one time there were no fewer than twenty-seven Scotsmen serving as colonels in the Swedish army.

In East Jersey the Scots settled in the region south of Sandy Hook, about twenty-five miles from New York, in Monmouth county. Here they founded the 'Old Scots Church' on what was to become the battlefield of Monmouth Court House, which for over a century was a rallying point for American Presbyterians. Most of the emigrants were poor, some no doubt having lost their all in the uprising, others being tenants or labourers. The

proprietors provided transportation for some families, and assigned them small farms, stocked with cattle, seed and tools, in return for half their output for a limited number of years. More numerous were those who paid their own transportation through indentures which obligated them to work as labourers on landed estates for four or five years after reaching the colony.

Although small in numbers the East Jersey Scots wielded a powerful influence through their leaders, a small number of gentlemen who for years monopolized some of the chief administrative offices. In 1703 Colonel Robert Quarry, sent over by the English government to investigate conditions in the colonies, wrote: 'The Eastern Division (of New Jersey) has been a long time in the hands of a very few Scotch'. Whatever of truth there may be in this statement, there can be no doubt that Scotch sturdiness and leadership were important in shaping this province in its infancy.

The East Jersey settlers came from the lowlands, but the next group, much larger in numbers, were Highlanders. Selecting a region on the Cape Fear river, four hundred miles south of New Jersey, and turning their backs on their native hills, thousands crowded aboard the emigrant ships to make the long voyage to southern North Carolina. They came in two waves, the first after the battle of Culloden, and the other from 1760 to the outbreak of the American Revolution. It will be recalled that when Prince Charles' men were hunted down by the Duke of Cumberland, some were permitted to choose exile

as an alternative to the gallows. Of these a very large proportion came to North Carolina, landing at Wilmington and then moving west through the forests to settle in the vicinity of the present Fayetteville. In 1749 Neal McNeal brought over a group of five hundred, who spread out over Bladen, Anson and Cumberland counties, to take up little holdings, make clearings in the forest, build their cabins and lay out crops.

It was the series of laws passed in 1746, designed to sweep away the last vestiges of clan organization, which was in part responsible for the second migration. The abolition of heritable jurisdictions and military tenures brought distress, since the old chiefs, who often had been fathers to their people, were now in many cases replaced by rapacious landlords who squeezed from their tenants the last penny. Suffering was aggravated by the conversion of agricultural lands into sheep folds, and by the growing competition of Ulster in the linen trade. Evictions were numerous, unemployment was widespread. James Hogg, of Caithness, found that the lawlessness fostered by poverty made farming so difficult that he decided to migrate with his family, servants and many of his neighbours, to the land of promise across the Atlantic. When noised about in the Highlands this brought so many who were eager to join him that he was compelled to turn away hundreds. Yet when he sailed from Thurso, he took with him a group of 280. By 1775 there were about 20,000 Highlanders in North Carolina.

American historians have been at a loss to explain

the loyalty of the Highlanders to the royal cause during the American Revolution. Since many had fought and suffered for the Pretender, and almost all were the victims of the recent changes in Scotland for which the government was responsible, one might suppose they would have welcomed an opportunity for revenge. In explanation it is stated that many were bound by a solemn oath to be loyal, an oath which their deep religious convictions would not permit them to break; that the ideal of democracy was foreign to them, so that they were at a loss to understand why their neighbours were taking up arms; that some of their leaders still held estates in Scotland which they did not wish to forfeit; that their failure in previous rebellions had convinced them of the futility of resisting the King.

A third migration of Scots to America, a migration of merchants and agents for mercantile houses chiefly from Glasgow, was not confined to any one colony, though most numerous in Virginia, and was spread out over the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Although fewer persons were involved than in the movement of Highlanders, the implications, both for Scotland and America, were even more important. Not only was the prosperity of the city of Glasgow in large part built up by the activities of its American merchants, but the prosperity of the colonial ports as well.

Prior to the Act of Union the Scotch merchants looked longingly over the barrier of the Navigation Acts into the forbidden Eden of the colonial markets, and not infrequently a vessel would elude the Eng-

lish customs officers and slip in with a cargo of sugar or tobacco. So, in 1707, when these markets were thrown open to them, they were quick to profit by the opportunity. Within a few decades Scottish firms had gained a footing in many ports in British America, and goods which formerly had gone to Bristol or London were diverted to Glasgow.

The opening of the tobacco trade is credited to four able and enterprising young men, Messrs. Cunningham, Spiers, Glassford and Ritchie. It is stated that the first venture to the Chesapeake Bay was entrusted to the sole care of the master of a vessel, a shrewd man, but ignorant of accounts. On his return, when the partners asked him for an account, he confessed that he could give none, but instead threw down on the table a stocking stuffed full of coins. On the next voyage a skilled book-keeper went along who in due season rendered a neatly drawn up account, but no stocking.

In the tobacco trade the English firms had dealt directly with the planters, purchasing tobacco from them and taking their orders for manufactured goods. But the Scots inaugurated a new era by sending agents to America to set up branch houses and to look after their interests and secure new business. This gave them a great advantage over their rivals of London, Bristol, Liverpool and Whitehaven, an advantage which became even more pronounced when the Glasgow firms owned their own vessels. 'Between you and me', William Nelson wrote to the English merchant John Norton in 1768, 'they sail their ships so much cheaper than you can

from London and they have some other advantages in the trade to which you and I are strangers, that it is my opinion that in a few years the London market will be cheaply supplied through that channel'. How nearly right he was, customs figures show. For several years prior to 1770 from 35,000 to 45,000 hogsheads of tobacco came into the Clyde annually, while in 1771 the number was 49,016. Glasgow had become the greatest tobacco mart in Great Britain.

And with the hogsheads came wealth. The great firm of Spiers and Glassford owned 24 fine vessels and their imports in some years exceeded 10,000 hogsheads. John Glassford resided in the old Shawfield mansion, on the north side of Trongate. Not the least of the monuments to the tobacco trade were Virginia Avenue, which the merchant Andrew Buchanan cut through his grounds, and the splendid mansion which he erected at its head but which he did not live to see completed. The 'Virginians', as the merchants were called, regarded themselves as the Glasgow aristocracy and were conspicuous at the Cross in their long scarlet cloaks and bushy wigs. Even their servants were resplendent in plush breeches, thread stockings, shoe buckles and gold bands in their hats.

In the meanwhile many of the agents and clerks in Virginia were doing very well on their own account. After a few years some of them would set up in business for themselves, had their own warehouses and ships, and founded a merchant aristocracy in the colony. Typical was Niel Jameson,

who started business at Norfolk. The extent of his transactions is revealed by his accounts, which to-day repose in the Library of Congress spread out over forty or more volumes. In his warehouses on the wharves of the Elizabeth river one could see bales of cloth, clothing, farm implements, kitchen utensils, silks, and other manufactured European goods; pipes of wine from Madeira; hogsheads of sugar and molasses from Jamaica or Barbados; the Orinoco and Sweetscented tobacco of Virginia and Maryland; the naval stores of North Carolina, awaiting shipment to Europe, or the West Indies, or to points in the colonies. On the Virginia rivers he had a network of agencies and stores to which he sent European goods and which in return sent him hogsheads of tobacco. This river traffic he carried on in light vessels of his own. His, also, were the ships which took on tobacco at Norfolk for shipment to Glasgow, or the tar, pitch and turpentine, and the meat and bread of North Carolina, for London or the West Indies.

Nor had Jameson built up this trade without keen competition from his countrymen, for the McIntoshes, the Goodriches and other Scots in Norfolk, Fredericksburg, Falmouth, Alexandria and other Virginia ports were also doing a thriving business.

With the passage of the Sugar Act of 1764, which threatened to destroy the lucrative trade between the British colonies on the American continent and the foreign West Indies, the merchants protested vigorously. They were still protesting when news reached America of the Stamp Act, so they joined in

assailing that also. Listed in the first Committees of Correspondence were many Scotch merchants. But when protests seemed likely to ripen into war they drew back. War meant ruin—the closing of British ports to their goods, perhaps the loss of their ships, perhaps the destruction of their wharves and warehouses. Norfolk became a loyalist city. When the Scotch governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, took refuge there from the Revolutionists, he organized the merchants and their clerks into what he called his Caledonian regiment. Later, when the Virginians, clothed in buckskin hunting shirts and armed with the deadly American rifle, closed in on the place, the merchants placed their families and goods on board their vessels and left it to its fate. That fate was destruction, for the Revolutionists applied the torch to every house, so that the British could not in later invasions use it as a base. But they laid the blame on Dunmore, and so effectively that to this day historians, even British historians, think it was he who burned the town.

After the war the Scots came back, and finding Norfolk still in ruins, planned to make Portsmouth across the river the centre of their activities. But they met with such a cold reception that they preferred to go back to their old charred warehouses and residences. As a result, Norfolk today is the greatest port of Virginia, and Portsmouth a mere suburb.

It need hardly be stated that the tobacco merchants on this side shared with the Norfolk traders their opposition to the Revolution. At Glasgow mass

meetings pledged support for King George, while £10,000 was raised to equip a corps of 1000 men, afterwards the 83rd regiment of foot. Mr. John Wardrop, a Virginia merchant, beat the drum; Mr. James Finlay played the bagpipe, while other prominent merchants tuned in with the fife. Some of the tobacco ships were converted into transports.

In public life Scotsmen played a rôle no less important than in commerce. I trust I may be pardoned if I turn once more to my native Virginia to illustrate this fact. In the period from 1680 to 1765, the so-called Golden Age of Virginia history, the three most prominent figures in this English colony were Scots—the Reverend James Blair, Governor Alexander Spotswood and Governor Robert Dinwiddie.

Blair was an Anglican clergyman whom the Bishop of London sent over as his Commissary and who for over half a century remained the head of the established church in Virginia. He it was who instituted far-reaching reforms in the clergy, punishing those who were loose in their life, securing for them better salaries, filling vacant parishes with men of piety and ability, insisting upon a better observance of the liturgy. He it was who founded William and Mary, the second college to be established in the American colonies, and the *alma mater* of Thomas Jefferson and other distinguished Virginians. When he returned to the colony after securing a charter and a grant of money from the King and Queen, he brought with him plans for the main building drawn by Sir Christopher Wren. Blair himself was pre-

sident of the college for many years. It is said that when he brought an order to the Lord of the Exchequer for £2,000 which the King and Queen had granted to the college, the latter demurred strongly. 'But, my Lord', said Blair, 'the college is designed to educate young men for the ministry, and we in Virginia have souls to be saved as well as you in England'. 'Damn your souls', was the reply, 'make tobacco'.

Blair made himself a power in the colony, chiefly through the influence of the great English prelates. The planter aristocracy were inclined to snub him as an upstart, but they did so at their peril, for he won victory after victory over them. In the end, after he had married a Virginia lady of good family, the F.F.Vs took him to their hearts. Nor did he hesitate to give battle to governors, and no fewer than three, who attempted to thwart his reforms, were ousted at his instigation.

Alexander Spotswood, though no friend of his fellow Scot, Blair, was perhaps the ablest of Virginia's colonial governors. Under his leadership the province gained rapidly in population and wealth, its trade expanded, new industries were established, the frontiers were pushed outward. Spotswood should rightly be regarded as the father of the beautiful Valley of Virginia, for it was his expedition, the so-called Knights of the Golden Horseshoe, which reached the summits of the Blue Ridge mountains to look down upon the rolling country beyond while they drank toasts to the king and the royal family. Perhaps this valley, rather than the county on the

south bank of the Rappahannock, should bear the name Spotsylvania.

Even more important were the services of Governor Dinwiddie, for it was the foresight, persistence and administrative ability of this Scotsman which were largely responsible for the fact that the civilization of the major part of North America is today British rather than French. Dinwiddie it was who sounded the alarm bell when the French moved into the Ohio valley and brought the chain of forts which linked their possessions on the St. Lawrence with those on the Mississippi to the immediate rear of the English settlements. Only after he had sent letter after letter to the British government showing the vast importance of the issue did they dispatch General Braddock to lead an expedition into the disputed region; and only after he had pleaded earnestly with the Virginia Assembly did they equip a force under Colonel Washington to support him. That Braddock was disastrously defeated in no way detracts from the credit due to Dinwiddie.

In education, as in political leadership, commerce and religion, America's debt to Scotland is great. It is not true, as some have said, that the American college system had its origins in the Scottish universities. Yale, Princeton and other colonial institutions grew directly out of the English dissenting academies. It will be recalled that the academies consisted of groups of young men, most of whom were studying for the ministry, who gathered around some distinguished clergyman to receive instruction whenever he could snatch a few hours from his other

duties. They were small, were not chartered, had no endowment, owned no buildings, but were progressive in their educational ideals. Transplant the academy to America, and give it a charter and buildings, and you have in essence the colonial college.

But upon Princeton, and through Princeton, upon the network of schools and colleges throughout the great southwest region, which embraced southwest Pennsylvania, western Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina and eastern Kentucky and Tennessee, Scotland exercised a powerful influence. The Presidents and Trustees corresponded with leading educators in Scotland, questioning them on text books, methods of instruction and the curriculum. And when the college was in search of funds with which to erect their main building, two of the Trustees, Samuel Davies and Gilbert Tennent, visited Scotland, where the Assembly passed a resolution requesting every congregation to make a contribution. Nassau Hall, sacred to all Princeton men, is in part at least a memorial to Scotch generosity and interest in America.

Of greater importance still was Scotland's contribution of Princeton's great president, John Witherspoon. When Witherspoon left his church at Paisley in 1768 he found Princeton a small college devoted chiefly to educating ministers for the Presbyterian church; when he died three decades later it had become a training school for political leadership. It was not by chance that it sent more men to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 than any other college. It was Witherspoon, also, who extended the

influence of the college throughout the South, making it national, rather than local, in character. Under his leadership Princeton became the educational and the religious capital of all Presbyterian America.

It is an interesting coincidence that exactly a century after Witherspoon came to Princeton the college again turned to Scotland for leadership by calling to its presidency James McCosh. Of all the Princeton presidents the two Scotsmen, with the possible exception of Woodrow Wilson, exercised the greatest influence on the institution.

It was well understood that Witherspoon, when he came to America, was to be, not only the head of the principal Presbyterian college, but the unofficial head of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterians had been split by the revival known as the Great Awakening into two groups, the New Lights and the Old Sides, and there was urgent need of a leader, not affiliated with either but respected by both, to restore unity. Witherspoon, who was well known in America as one of the ablest Scottish clergymen, fulfilled these conditions admirably. And admirably did he play the part of pacifier and leader. When the American General Assembly was organized, he it was who drew up the plan, and he who was most influential in launching it. John Witherspoon is accepted today by American Presbyterians as the father of their Church.

It is truly remarkable that this clergyman and educator should also have become one of the ablest of American political leaders. From the first Witherspoon sympathised with the colonists in their

resistance to the reactionary government of George III and to the attempts of Parliament to wrest from their hands the vital power of taxation. It was quite natural, then, that the people should turn to him for leadership, and send him to the New Jersey convention and later to the Continental Congress. Here he voted for and signed the Declaration of Independence. Throughout most of the Revolution he remained in Congress, serving upon many of the important committees and wielding a powerful influence with his colleagues. When someone asked Witherspoon why the colonies separated from England, he answered: 'Because we found that we could not have liberty without independence'.

This brief recital of the debt which the United States owes to Scotland would be incomplete should we omit the great influence of the so-called Scotch-Irish. I know that the word Scotch-Irish has been called inaccurate, but we use it for want of a better term. It will serve to designate Scotsmen who moved to north Ireland and lived there long enough to come under the influence of their new surroundings. I do not know to what extent you consider them Scotsmen today, but two centuries ago, at the time of their great migration to America, they were very close indeed to their mother country.

The causes of this migration are well known. Chief among them was the Woollen Act of 1699, which prohibited the exportation of raw wool and woollen cloth from Ireland, and so brought ruin to the prosperous sheep-raising and cloth manufacturing industries. Dean Swift, in his *Irish Tracts*, gives

a vivid description of the poverty and suffering caused by this ruthless law. The situation was aggravated by the expiration of long-term leases, with the eviction of tenants and the doubling and trebling of rents. When one considers, also, that the Act of 1704, excluding Presbyterians from civil and military offices, practically denied the Scotch-Irish any influence in the government, it can readily be understood why many thousands were eager to leave.

And thousands and thousands did leave. In some cases whole congregations, under the leadership of their pastors, transferred themselves to the New World to begin communities to which they often gave the names of those they had left in Ulster. But the greater part came as individuals under terms of indenture. Year after year the ships from Belfast were crowded. Some went to New England where they were accorded a rather cold reception by their fellow Calvinists; some landed in New Jersey to settle in the central counties adjacent to the Covenanters; some went to the Carolinas. But by far the largest group landed at Philadelphia.

• Finding all desirable land in the older parts of the colonies already taken up, they pushed on westward and southwestward into the vast American forests. Many settled in central and southwestern Pennsylvania, especially in Alleghany county, others moved into western Maryland, still others entered the Valley of Virginia, and other thousands found homes in western North Carolina and northwestern South Carolina. Later many more moved over the mountains into the Mississippi basin to lay the

foundations of Kentucky and Tennessee. It is estimated that at the outbreak of the American Revolution there were 250,000 in the colonies.

Excellent settlers they made. Most of them acquired small farms, where they cultivated Indian corn and wheat, planted orchards, kept their own live-stock and, in numerous instances, their own distilleries. In one community, while a new church was under construction to replace an older one, the congregation held services in a distillery. Some of the newcomers brought looms and so turned to good purpose their skill in weaving. They brought, also, the Scotch accent, many old Scotch songs, old Scotch customs, the Scotch thrift, Scotch piety and even the Scotch bagpipes.

Most important of all they brought Scotch Presbyterianism, and Scotch education. It was a matter of grave concern to the settlers that the frontier was so thinly populated that it was difficult to organize congregations and to secure ministers to serve them. But they found the solution in the circuit-rider. Armed with Bible and with their meagre belongings packed in saddle-bags, youthful clergymen rode from community to community along the frontier, holding services often in barns, often in the open. In time, however, little churches, constructed of logs, arose in the forests, which later gave way to more pretentious structures. Before the end of the eighteenth century there were hundreds of Presbyterian congregations dotting the great region from the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania to northern Georgia.

The contributions of the Ulster Scots to America are many. They, more than any other group, created the first western frontier. Frontiers there had been before, but not frontiers cut off from water communication with Europe, as were those of western Pennsylvania and the southern back country. Excellent frontiersmen the Ulstermen made, battling with equal fortitude against the Indians and the wilderness, creating prosperous, enlightened communities where formerly had been only forests, wild beasts and equally wild men. To them goes the credit of being the first pioneers west of the Appalachians and of opening the Mississippi valley to British civilization.

Important, also, was their contribution to education. In every settlement the school followed close on the heels of the church. At first the schools were held in private houses, often with the settler's wife as teacher. But later, with the coming of a minister, it was he who assumed the burden. If he were a Princeton graduate, he might open an academy in a crude log cabin, to give instruction to the older children in Latin, Greek and mathematics, or even in philosophy. In many cases these academies expanded into colleges, which today number their undergraduates by the hundreds.

During the American Revolution the Scotch-Irish to a man took sides against the King. They had suffered so much from the government in their old homes and had enjoyed such privileges in the new, that their loyalty was no longer for Britain but for America. Moreover, their life on the frontier,

that great school of individualism, had made them impatient of restraint. Strange it is that Scotch highlanders and lowlanders, who I understand have had many clashes in the old country, now should resume their feud three thousand miles away in North America. When Lord Cornwallis sent Colonel Patrick Ferguson to North Carolina to organize the Highland recruits to the British army into a regiment, they were attacked at King's Mountain by the Scotch-Irish and severely defeated. The Ulster Scots constituted the very back-bone of Washington's army. At Valley Forge, when many deserted him, they remained despite cold and hunger, to keep alive the waning cause.

In conclusion may I say that the people of the United States claim kinship with Scotland. Her blood runs in their veins, her thrift and industry has added strength to their economic life, her devotion to enlightenment finds its reflection in thousands of their schools and colleges, her religious conviction has influenced deeply their life and their churches, her genius for leadership has given them some of their greatest men. In this troubled world it should be our prayer and yours that the United States, Great Britain and the Dominions shall co-operate in peace to make a better world, as they are now co-operating in war. Interest as well as our traditions of freedom and self-government dictates it. But whatever happens, you of Scotland, no more than the English, can disclaim us. We are blood of your blood, bone of your bone.

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LXVI

THE ARTIST IN THE COMMUNITY



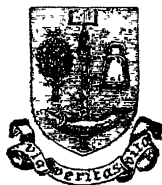
# THE ARTIST IN THE COMMUNITY

*The sixth W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered  
in the University of Glasgow  
18th April, 1945*

*by*

CHARLES MORGAN

M.A. (Oxon); F.R.S.L., LÉGION d'HONNEUR



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## THE ARTIST IN THE COMMUNITY

THIS lectureship exists to commemorate one of the most profound and humane of modern scholars, W. P. Ker. It would be appropriate that the lecturer should carry on Ker's work—that he should at all events move within the territory of his criticism; but to do so would require learning that I do not possess, and it has seemed right to me, in my choice of subject, to attempt no more than to move within the province of his independent and fearless spirit.

### I

I propose, therefore, to lay before you what I believe to be the next great problem which modern civilization has to face and solve: the problem of how to preserve liberty of thought from the attack of fanatical dogmatism, of how to strengthen the community of freedom against the authoritarian encroachments which now threaten it: in brief, of how to make sure that we and our children live and think and die as men and women, possessing our own minds and souls, and not as a censored and driven regiment with no virtue but obedience.

Next, I shall ask what place an artist has in a free community: what is his duty towards it and what its duty towards him? I shall suggest that the relationship between the artist and the community is, in one aspect, enduring, in that it arises from the nature of

art and the nature of society itself; and, in another aspect, constantly changing, in that it arises from changes in artistic practice and in the forms which society assumes in different epochs.

Finally, regarding this relationship between the artist and the community as, in part, constant, and, in part, variable, I shall inquire what the true relationship is now and is likely to become, and shall submit a concluding proposition: That by preserving this true relationship we may help to safeguard the liberty of thought and the community of freedom itself, for an artist is neither the community's priest nor the community's slave, but a member of it who holds in his especial charge certain qualities essential to its spiritual life. He is, as it were, the breath of the people's imagination without which they perish; and the people must learn, in each new phase of history, how to adjust themselves to art, how to receive it, how to make of it an ally with religion and science in every man's quest of truth; how, in each new climate, to breathe freely and deeply; for, if they do not, the authoritarians will stifle them, and the spirit of man, though it cannot die, be cast down, for long centuries, into obscurity and submission. Mrs. Charles Kingsley, in her *Life of her husband*, spoke a little strangely, as it may now seem to us, of her husband's 'sympathy with Art, and deeper matters'. We may smile at her phrase but at the same time honour her sense of art's relationship to all that she most valued in life. We, in our turn, are called upon to re-gather our strength from Athens and the Renaissance that, after

the terrible retrogression which our lives have witnessed, we may prepare a way for what our children or our grandchildren, if they survive, may dare to call the Re-enlightenment.

## II

I will, then, attempt, first of all, to state the problem as I see it. When, in the distant future, historians sit down to write, what title will they give to the chapter which describes the second half of the twentieth century? What is life going to be about?

There are many who say that what lies before us is predominantly an economic struggle, and a few others—too few, perhaps, for this is a subject which British public opinion too easily neglects—that our central problem will be of foreign policy. Both views are reasonable, but they are evidently interdependent, and there is danger in insisting on either of them to the exclusion of the other. What is possible economically depends not upon abstract theory, Marxian or other, but upon what our international relationships make possible; and we forget at our peril that foreign policy is the condition and sanction of home policy, and that security against foreign enemies is a first charge on social security and economic advance.

Among the principal subjects with which any historian of our times will have to deal is our attempt to relate foreign policy to economic policy and our ability to persuade ourselves, and to persuade others, to accept, for the sake of gradually

establishing an international law, certain limitations upon national sovereignty. That this is the direction in which peaceloving and unfanatical men will try to move the world is scarcely open to doubt. But will they be prevented by impatient and bloody extremists? This, I believe, is the question underlying all the questions of our time. Our differences of economic theory and foreign policy cannot be resolved, can scarcely be profitably discussed, until we have answered within us the personal question: Do I speak and think as a free man or as an authoritarian? Do I wish to live in a free community with men who differ from me in theory and faith, seeking with them—and with other nations—a reconciliation of practice, or am I determined to extirpate, in pursuit of what I believe to be right, whatever faith and theory differs from my own?

Some may feel that this presentation of the alternative is too abrupt. British men and women of my own generation and of a generation older than mine may think so, for we were brought up in an atmosphere and habit of liberty, but the alternative, I am sure, will not be considered too abrupt in France, where the tyrannies and ideologies have stalked into men's homes, or in Poland where—to our own humiliation—the glory of a great nation has been crushed between them, or in Italy where the labour of Garibaldi has been undone, or in Spain where hatred is a poison of the heart; nor, I believe, does the alternative, bitter though it is, seem unreal to Scotsmen and Englishmen of a generation younger than my own. It is to the young I dare to speak, for

it is their life, not mine, that will carry the remaining burden of this century, and the Re-enlightenment, if it comes, will be their children's, and perhaps their own, reward.

It was a very young man who first confronted me with this alternative. He was a fighter-pilot, shot down and terribly burned in the Battle of Britain. When he had recovered from his wounds, and the plastic surgeons had rebuilt his face, and he was struggling for that permission to fly again which, being granted, led to his death, he came to dine at my house in London. Through all the bombardments, I had tried to preserve one amenity there; we dined by candlelight and an open fire; and I remember that, after dinner, we went upstairs, I with the decanter and he with the candelabra. I remember it because it was in the upstairs room, just after we had entered it, that he, standing in mid-floor with a candelabrum in each hand, said: 'Nowadays, wherever I go, I ask myself that question about everybody. At dinner, I was asking it about you.' For the moment I had lost his drift. He was carrying on our dinner-table conversation, and I meanwhile had been thinking of other things. 'What question?' I asked. He put down the candelabra and told me, and we talked of it half the night.

His point was this. He felt that everyone in the modern world—everyone, soldier, priest, scholar, tradesman or housemaid—was potentially, whether he knew it or not, either a Communist or a Nazi. 'Potentially,' he insisted. 'As yet, I'm neither my-

self. But I know which way I'd go if I had to choose. And that's the question I ask myself about other people: which way would they go if they had to choose? Which way *will* they go *when* they have to choose? Which side are they on?'

I said: 'Are they necessarily on either side?'

He answered: 'Yes, I think they are, inside themselves. I think they must be. The world being what it is, a man can't remain an indifferentist.'

That was the word I challenged. It seemed to me false to suggest that the whole area of opinion lying between the two opposed totalitarian polities was indifferent, neutral, colourless, waiting only to drift helplessly into one or other of the warring armies.

He said: 'That at any rate is the impression that both sides try to give. To a great extent they are succeeding. They are planting the idea that not to be in one camp or the other is a form of uncourageous compromise, and that the whole idea of freedom as a positive force is dead.'

This was the discussion that held us into the night. He assumed that the battle to destroy the community of freedom was over or almost over, and that soon there would be no choice open except between one form of authoritarianism and another. Many in Europe feel as he did. The choice has been thrust upon them. I still believe that, in the long view of history, he and they will be seen to have been wrong. I think that it is in the destiny of the English-speaking peoples and, ultimately, after many vicissitudes, of a recovered France, to prove them wrong. But the other alternative remains. The question

may not yet be: 'To which Authoritarianism shall we submit?' Not yet: 'To which slave-master shall we surrender ourselves?' But already and urgently the question is: 'Shall we be bond or free?'

What the fighter-pilot said that night was a young man's evidence that the pressure of authoritarianism was heavy upon him. It is to be felt everywhere in the modern world, in the way in which religion is discussed, in the criticism of art on a basis of politics, in the penetration of common speech by ideological jargon, in the reluctance of so many men and women to defend their own opinion against the attack of extremists. It is to be felt, too, in the tendency, from which few of us are exempt, to be swayed by passing enthusiasms and passing indignations, to reverse our judgment of great issues and even of great nations in accordance with the swaying fortunes of a battle or the flow of some popular emotion, to be carried forward by slogans and headlines rather than by the reasoned development and application of principle. There was alarming evidence of this tendency in our attitude towards the confusion which arose in Athens when the Germans had gone out. I happen to believe that our Government was right to intervene, but I will not now discuss the merits of that dispute. What was remarkable about it, and relevant to our present subject, was that, when the trouble began, a great part of British opinion, instead of suspending judgment and waiting to ascertain the facts, instead of trying to discover patiently where the true interest of freedom lay,

aligned itself hastily on the Left or on the Right, and began to think and talk and write for or against one or other of the authoritarian ideologies. It was as if the minds of the British people had already begun to stiffen, to congeal into two clots of opinion, as if we had begun to lose our independence of judgment, our resilience of imagination, our power to refer each new problem, not to some rigid rule, but to our own consciences, our own sense of compassionate justice. It is the radical principle and the invariable practice of all authoritarian systems to freeze imagination, to prevent men and women from thinking for themselves. It is the radical principle of art to unfreeze the imagination and to enable men and women to think for themselves.

The problem of the future, as I understand it, now lies before you. Let us next consider what part an artist may play, and what part the community may enable him to play, in the solution of it.

### III

What I am now seeking to discover is whether there are any elements in the nature of art and in the nature of society which may be said to establish an enduring undercurrent of relationship between them. If these elements exist, if they are enduring like the tides, they will be a condition of the relationship between art and society in a particular epoch.

Now if anything in the doubtful history of our race is certain it is that before society existed there

were men, and that before schools or coteries or classifications existed there was art. Indeed the first artist was presumably subjective. He made his work of art, his song or the picture he drew on the wall of his cave, in order to express his sense of happiness or fear, or *his* sense of the form of the natural object he depicted. In other words, his art sprang from within him; it was not at first designed to produce an effect upon others; but one day, as he was drawing on the wall to please no one but himself, his wife said: 'My dear, that is not at all my idea of a mammoth. A mammoth, surely, has a longer tail', and so the relationship of art to society was begun. All our aesthetic troubles, and perhaps all our matrimonial troubles, began in that moment, for the first artist, we may be sure, was both flattered and annoyed—flattered because he really had been drawing a mammoth and his wife had recognized it; annoyed because there was, after all, great variety in mammoths and wide scope for the interpretation of them in their relationship to rocks or mountains—it all depended on what *impression* they made upon you—and the first artist thought it unreasonable that his wife should concentrate on the length of the animal's tail. So he said: 'It isn't a mammoth; it's what I feel about a mammoth'—half a lie, half a truth; and she said: 'Well, anyhow, it isn't what I feel about a mammoth. Let us ask Belinda.'

Belinda was their child, and when Belinda saw the picture she thought it was god; she fell down on her face and began to make propitiatory noises; and her father said: 'Well, really, this is too much!' and the

man within the artist slapped her soundly. But the artist within the man was flattered, and after a little while he began to say: 'Well, after all, whether I intended it or not, the effect was that I drew Belinda's idea of god. Perhaps that is what art *is*.'

Here, I think, he was right; he had, at any rate, hit upon one aspect of the truth; he had understood the relationship of his art to Belinda. There was, of course, another aspect of the truth, which no doubt troubled him again as soon as he took up another flint and began to scratch on another wall—namely, the relationship of his art to himself. Was he trying to reproduce a mammoth or, like Cézanne, to re-present it? Was he giving information about a mammoth, about the length of its tail for example, or was he, in his re-presentation of that debatable animal, giving information about himself? Or was he perhaps not giving information at all? Did he really care what his wife or what Belinda thought? There was a part of him, an extremely important part, that cared nothing for the effect of his drawing upon others or indeed for its likeness to a mammoth or a god; a part of him that was neither zoological nor theological nor social, nor even deliberately self-expressive; a part of him, an impulsive essence, the very seed of art, its innermost mystery, which, without rhyme or reason, said to him: 'Draw!' so that he drew, not for his own sake or for society's sake or for god's sake or even for art's sake, but because something inside him said: 'Draw!'

To this impulse, this absolute of art, many names are given. Some have spoken of it as 'art for art's

sake'; some as 'art to the glory of God'; some as a desire for absolute beauty which, to them, is truth and 'a joy for ever'; and in giving to the impulse these names they have unwittingly exposed it to the attack and ridicule of men who neither understand the names nor the thing. Let us beware how we attack or ridicule these names because perhaps to us one or other of them may seem limited or pretentious. Of course they are limited; they are an attempt to express the illimitable. Of course they sound pretentious; they are an attempt to express the inexpressible. Of course foolish cults grow up around them, clinging to the approximate name without having experienced the essential thing. But whatever the name, the impulse of art is holy and absolute as the impulse of love is holy and absolute, not to be traced to its origin, not to be accounted for by its effects, such an inward-feeling and outward-shining glory, such a 'silence within the heart of a cry', as you may see upon the face of Correggio's Io in the moment of her visitation by the god. I wish to establish this ecstatic impulse, neither self-regarding nor world-regarding, as the essence of the artistic act—as it is the essence of the act of love—because, without its saving presence in our minds, we cannot hope to understand rightly the relationship of an artist to the community. A hint of this relationship was given to the first artist when Belinda threw herself upon her face and began to worship not his mammoth but her own god. Towards his wife he had as an artist failed. All she had said was that the animal's tail was too long. Why

had he failed? Because in her he had provoked nothing but a slavish desire to have reproduced for her what she had already seen; she wanted repetition and uniformity which, together, are hell, not imagination and variety which are a way to heaven; she was not provoked to a fresh imagining of anything—not even of a mammoth, much less of a god. But with Belinda he had succeeded because by his work of art she had been carried beyond his work of art; it had, so to speak, broken up the coagulation of her mind as a poker thrust into a sleepy fire breaks up the coagulation of the embers; and a flame had jumped out and burned and dazzled her, and the flame was god. It might not have been god. It might have been anything—if she had been younger a divine doll, if a little older an almost divine lover. At all events, it was hers, not her father's: that is the point. It had grown in her soil, like a flower from a seed. What her mother had wanted was what society so often demands of artists—something ready-made useful and familiar, something that fulfilled her preconceptions and required of her neither adjustment nor growth nor imaginative effort of any kind, a clearly recognizable mammoth down to the last inch of its tail. But that was because the mind of Belinda's mother had become fixed, frozen, authoritarian, and the art of Belinda's father had failed to break it up. But with Belinda herself he had succeeded, and, when he had recovered from the shock of having his mammoth taken for a god, he said to himself: 'I made the girl imagine for herself.' And then he added: 'That is what art is for. What art is

is a different matter. I know and feel that inside myself, and Correggio will know and feel it when the time comes for him to paint Io in the moment of her visitation by the god. Meanwhile I know what art is for. It is to enable men to imagine for themselves.' And he thought, in saying this, that he had solved the problem of the relationship of the artist to society, and I think he had taken a necessary step towards the solution of it; but he had not solved it because two vital questions remained unanswered and the answers to these differ or appear to differ, from age to age.

## IV

These questions are: 'By what means shall an artist enable men to imagine for themselves?' and, secondly: 'What shall he enable them to imagine?' To the second question the authoritarian answer is simple: 'The people shall not be enabled to imagine freely. They shall be compelled or persuaded or tempted to imagine what is good for them, and what is good for all is good for one and what is good for one is good for all.' Sometimes the authoritarians dress up this answer in a more dignified and ancient dress, and say: 'The people shall be made to imagine the Truth', and, when authority says that, we are on the way to the fire and the torture-chamber, to the death of Socrates, to the scourge and the crown of thorns. Why will men torment one another for the kingdom of this world, which is worthless when they have attained it? Why will they torment one another for the kingdom of God, which is within

them? If art has anything to teach it is that these torments are vain, and that to mistake one supposed aspect of truth for Truth itself and so to imprison men's curiosity and aspiration in the dungeon of an ideology, is the unforgivable sin against the spirit of man.

An artist is bound by his vocation to recognize as sin the authoritarian's claim to be a monopolist of truth. For that very reason the word truth cannot be excluded from his answers to the two vital questions. When he is asked what he will enable men to imagine, he will answer, in summary: 'Aspects of Truth.' When he is asked by what means he will do this, he will answer, again in summary: 'By communicating my own visions of Truth.' You will observe that the word 'visions' is in the plural: 'visions', not 'vision'; you will remember that Thomas Hardy called a volume of his poems *Moments of Vision* and that he was careful to renounce all claim to a monopoly of truth. 'I have no philosophy,' he wrote, 'merely what I have often explained to be a confused heap of impressions, like those of a bewildered child at a conjuring show.' And you will not have failed to notice that when that giant among artists, Tolstoy, reached that stage of his life which is called his 'conversion'; when, that is to say, he exchanged his many visions of truth for one vision of it and established an ethical system; he became so much the less a practising artist and indeed repudiated art altogether as he had formerly understood it. But Hardy's saying that he had no philosophy is not to be understood to mean that he

had no point of view. He stood on a hill-top and from it surveyed experience, and it was his own hill-top; he was not inconsistent in the sense of being without distinct individuality; he was not for ever blown hither and thither by the opinions of others, joining leagues and clubs and fashionable groups and peering out at life through their blinkers. He preserved his integrity, guarded his individuality, looked out from his own hill-top. But he did not look only north, or only south, or only east or west. He did not fix upon a favourite view and say: 'This is Truth. There is no other.' He surveyed the whole landscape of experience with what eyes he had, and said to us: 'Look: what do you see with your different eyes?' And we looked, and, though we did not see what he had seen, we saw what we had not seen before and might never have seen but for his visionary flash.

## V

What is it then that an artist enables men to see? I think that ideally he enables them, looking out from the point of view of their own individualities, to see their own experience in a light of Truth—in *a* light, not *the* light, for there are many. But the phrase 'in a light of Truth' is a vague one except to the man who uses it. I have used it, and cling to it, because it indicates to me something that is essential to my idea of the function of art in a community, but I will try to express in more concrete terms my answer to the question: 'What is it that an artist enables men to imagine?'

An understanding of art's effect upon us, of its real value to mature men and women, may be reached by trying to remember what its effect was in childhood. Do you remember, can you still feel, what it was then to fall under the spell of a book? I remember well how, as I read, a circle seemed to be woven round me forbidding my thoughts to wander, so that attention became concentration, and concentration became at first effortless, then involuntary, then necessitous, and at last something more—absorption, self-surrender, a passing into another world. So the spell would fall. But the world into which I entered was never altogether the author's world, though I saw it by his light. My own identity was no more lost than a dreamer's identity is lost during his dream; but it was, as it were, distilled; what moved in the imagined world was not I, with the inhibitions of my self-consciousness, but the essence of I, freed from the knowledge that I was eight years old, or that I had a brother and two sisters, or that my preparation was not done, or that, if I walked round the little wood that bordered the tennis-lawn, I should come to the kitchen-garden: freed, that is to say, from the relationships of age, of person, of duty, of place, which tied me in my ordinary life: liberated from my social and temporal bonds, and yet liberated in such a way that I did not become, in the transition, anti-social, for I was liberated from my egotistical bonds as well. This was the first part of the spell—liberation, intensification, purification—a penetration of that film of personality to which name and circumstances are

attached—a walking clean through the looking-glass.

On the other side of the looking-glass was not, as some pretend, an escape from life, but a new impulse and vitality. On this side of the looking-glass we are bound by an unreal sense of order, of partition, of what is congruous and what incongruous; we think of time as if it were a calendar on the wall, each day to be stripped off in turn, the past, the present and the future impenetrable by one another; and this is spiritually untrue; all time is simultaneous; my end is in my beginning. On this side of the looking-glass, we are bound always by a sense that each individuality is locked within itself, so that, even between two people who love each other, though there is communication like the tapping on prison-walls, there is no fusion, and we struggle continually towards this fusion unattainable in this world, giving many names to our struggle; sometimes the name of personal love, sometimes of friendship, sometimes of congregation in the worship of a god, sometimes of society or community. Under the spell of art this separateness may be transcended. On the other side of the looking-glass the prison walls are down. There is inter-penetration of individuality, of time, of place. I well remember that, in childhood, under the spell of a story, I used to feel, without any sense of incongruity, that I myself was present at the Siege of Troy though I remained fully aware that the narrative belonged to the past; on my way home with Odysseus, I found Nausicaa playing ball with her maidens on a stretch of sea-shore where

I had bathed yesterday; she had her own face, *and* the face of a beautiful girl whom I knew, *and* a face that was featureless, indescribable, like the face which Michelangelo left unpainted in his unfinished picture, 'The Entombment'; she had many beauties, and, as well, an absolute beauty. And I knew, when I read of the Agony in the Garden, that where Jesus kneeled to pray was in a corner of the lawn in front of my own house, just as Giovanni Bellini knew, when he painted the scene, that Jesus kneeled on a little mound in the midst of an Italian landscape; and it seemed not unfitting or untrue that, within two hundred yards of this tennis lawn, was a steep dell or pit into which Joseph was cast by his brethren; nor was it unfitting or untrue.

And this breaking down by art of the compartments of the mind belongs not only to childhood. I first read Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* when I was a young naval officer in the China Seas. My mind accepted the poet's description of his scene—the ancient castle, the bloodhound at the gate, the painted glass of the upper room.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon  
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;  
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:  
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest  
Save wings, for heaven—

For me then, for me now, full on this casement shines  
the wintry moon, and yet, at the same time and with

an enhancement, not a dissipation, of the illusion, it shines also into a cabin of H.M.S. *Monmouth* at sea, in which cabin for ever Madeline sleeps.

That is the spell—not in this room, not in this large company, but in the cabin of the *Monmouth* at sea, that was the spell which broke down the divisions of time, place and circumstance, and set the spirit free to go on its voyages. The greatest tribute that a writer earns from us is not that we keep our eyes fast upon his page, forgetting all else; but that sometimes without knowing that we have ceased to read, we allow his book to rest, and look out over and beyond it with newly opened eyes, discovering all else. Then lies open to earthbound man the firmament of the spirit; he takes wing and travels in it, liberated from the chains of partial judgment and from the blindness of close appearances. Like a bird released from a cage, he soars, and sees truth in new aspects. And though the spell of art breaks at last and he returns to earth, it is not to the cage of his former prejudice that he returns. The spell of art breaks, the *Eve of St. Agnes* is ended; the young officer finds himself in the cabin again, feels the throb of engines, listens to the whirr of an electric fan. It is five minutes to eight bells, and he goes on to the bridge to keep his middle-watch. But he has been a liberated spirit, and thereafter, in all life's embittered divisions, in all his faults and follies and self-imprisonments and hardnesses of heart, he never altogether ceases to be aware of the unity of the living with the dead, and in all his temptations to hatred or fear he cannot be without compassion. Art has planted in him a seed from

which his own imagination shall spring; has fertilized his earth that of it he may be reborn. An artist does not renew society; he enables men to renew themselves and so, in the long run, the society in which they live.

## VI

In saying this, in suggesting what an artist may enable men to imagine, I have, perhaps, already implied an answer to the other vital question: how does an artist produce this effect? I shall not here elaborate that answer, for I do not wish to plunge into a discussion of technical processes or into a matching of one school with another. I seek a common factor, and this much, I think, is clear; that if the true effect of art is to enable men to re-value their own experience in terms of the absolute values—that is to say, in terms of Compassion, Beauty and Truth—the artist himself must value life in those terms and must be able to communicate his valuation in a way that is not merely a statement of his opinion or even an account of his vision but is fertilizing.

This view of the function of art receives endorsement as soon as we ask ourselves what the difference is between a good book, important in its own age, and an immortal book which has continuing life in generation after generation. When you and I read the *Decameron* of Boccaccio or the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, our pleasure and excitement are not the same as the pleasure and excitement in which these masterpieces

were written. We are different creatures, nurtured in a different age, and what we imagine is not what those dead writers imagined. In brief, their books are alive because their life is renewed in us, because we re-imagine them; and their genius consists in their power to enable us to do so, in their fertilizing power. They are not beautiful flowers pressed in an album; they seed, and, though they die in one generation of men, they bring forth in another. So Keats, who was far removed from Boccaccio and did not see what he saw, was nevertheless inspired by a story of Boccaccio's to write *Isabella or the Pot of Basil* and we, reading *Isabella*, though we do not see what Keats saw, are impregnated by his vision to bring forth our own.

Now if we agree that, from the point of view of the community, what is important in an artist is his impregnating-power, and that, from the point of view of an artist, what is important in the community is its power to be impregnated and to re-present his vision in an eternal vitality and freshness, does it not follow in the first place that the subject of a work of art, though important, has not, and cannot have, the primary importance that a part of modern criticism, and particularly authoritarian criticism, is inclined to attach to it?

The subject of a story or a poem (and I continue to speak in terms of literature, though the same principle may be applied to the other arts) the subject of a story or a poem is evidently important because neither story nor poem can exist without a subject; but the subject is not the essence or the immortal,

fertilizing quality of the work of art, but a limitation upon it. No one, unless he is a historian in quest of material, now reads Dickens because he wrote about prison-reform or Turgenev because he wrote about liberalism in Russia or Victor Hugo because he attacked Napoleon the Third; and no one in the future will read Mr Wells because he once chose as his subject certain doctrines of the Fabian Society. Or, rather, people may *read* these authors because they are interested now or in the future in subjects related to these subjects, but their own imaginations will not be fertilized by the subject—for then any pamphlet would serve as well—but by the excitement with which the author wrote about the subject. The fertilizing power is not the subject, but the aesthetic passion which the author pours into it; and this aesthetic passion is expressed not in subject alone or in treatment alone but in a harmony between them. Therefore we are not to say except at the peril of an ultimate sterility: ‘This subject is admissible, that subject is barred,’ or: ‘This treatment is admirable, that treatment is ruled out’, and this is precisely what the authoritarians of all ages do say. It is madness and folly for us to cry: ‘But we are modern. Our particular brand of authoritarianism really is right. Our preference for free verse—or what you will—really is the last word in prosody. Our particular swerve towards ecclesiasticism or proletarianism or romanticism or realism—or what you will—really is the law and the prophets.’ In saying this, we are ourselves committing all the sins which we condemn in others as we read the history of literature. We

say of Victorian criticism that it insisted too much on the religious or ethical content of the work it criticized. And so it did. But it knew what it was doing; according to its lights it could sometimes be wonderfully fair, and we find that when Mrs. Humphry Ward published *Robert Elsmere*, a novel which struck to the very heart of Victorian religious controversy, *The Spectator* could say:

Profoundly as we differ from Mrs. Humphry Ward's criticism of Christianity we recognize in her book one of the most striking pictures of a sincere religious ideal that has ever yet been presented to our generation under the disguise of a modern novel.

How many modern reviews are there which, being wedded to one or other of the authoritarian ideologies or even to one of our slightly less ferocious economic 'isms', would thus praise on its merits the work of a writer from whom they 'profoundly differed'? It is within the recollection of you all how, in the period between this war and the last, a powerful section of criticism looked upon certain subjects and certain treatments with such horror that they were excluded from discussion and from the anthologies. With the exception of one unrepresentative poem about Clouds, Rupert Brooke was completely shut out from Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*; his war poems and his love poems were treated as if they were obscene. In the same volume another poet of the same generation, Robert Nichols, is given a place, but his war poems also are unrepresented. Yeats would not give room to this,

which will live when two-thirds of the poems he included are forgotten:

Was there love once? I have forgotten her.

Was there grief once? Grief yet is mine.

O loved, living, dying, heroic soldier,

All, all, my joy, my grief, my love are thine!

And if Yeats, a great poet, compiling not a personal anthology but an Oxford book, could be thus cabined by a partisan distaste for certain subjects and treatments, how much fiercer and narrower was the partisanship of the camp-followers whose very livelihood depended upon their closely following the camp! They took the view that art should, in its subject, reflect what Yeats calls their 'social passion' and what I should call their political fanaticism. They insisted further that certain treatments, certain ways of writing, should be regarded as the brand of Cain. They howled against romanticism as Victorian spinsters howled against sex.

Great Heaven! When these with clamour shrill

Drift out to Lethe's harbour bar

A verse of Lovelace shall be still

As vivid as a pulsing star.

The verse is William Watson's, and Yeats himself quoted it in his preface to the Oxford Book. How strange that he should quote it and himself fall into the very error that it condemned!

No: we are not to dictate to an artist either subject or treatment, nor are we to deny to him any subject or any treatment. We are not schoolmistresses. We are not censors. All that matters is that the sub-

ject be one that awakes the artist's aesthetic passion, and that the harmony between subject and treatment be such that it casts a spell upon him, enabling him to be visited by his god, and so casts a spell upon us, enabling us to be visited by ours. 'The excellence of every art', said Keats, 'is—' What a wonderful beginning of a sentence! If the page of Keat's manuscript had ended there and the next page been lost, the world would have been breathless to know how the sentence continued. 'The excellence of every art', said Keats, 'is—' and he did not say that it was in its subject or in its treatment, still less that it was in its social passion or its adherence to any ethical system or in its contemporaneity. 'The excellence of every art', said Keats, 'is its intensity.' And what did he mean by that? Fortunately he tells us. 'Capable', he continues, 'of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth.' Do not misunderstand him. By 'disagreeables' he does not mean things that are unpleasant to us; he means those things which do not agree together, which clash in our immediate experience, but which harmonize when seen in the aspect of eternity. Keats's 'disagreeables' are what I have called our incongruities, of time, of place, of individuality, of right seemingly opposed to right, of loyalty conflicting with loyalty. It is the function of art by its intensity to penetrate these incongruities, to perceive some aspect of order in the chaos of living, some aspect of beauty in that order, some aspect of truth in that beauty, and so to distil experience that we are made partakers of its

essence and are enabled to re-imagine it and to renew ourselves.

## VII

It would seem then that though, as I suggested at the outset, art continually changes its practice and society its forms so that to us, who float upon the surface of experience, there appears to be a variable relationship between them, and though, in a sense, the relationship *is* variable and we have continually to adjust ourselves to it, the adjustments we make should always be so designed as to preserve the true and essential relationship. This willingness to see the artist as an impregnator of the spirit of man and not as a propagator of his own, or our own, opinions, is of the more importance in a period of swift and radical social change. The tendency of our time is for human thought, alarmed by the rapidity of change, by the seeming dissolution of society into a condition of flux, to congeal into stiff, uniform chunks of fierce and frightened orthodoxy—the orthodoxy which condemned Keats because he did not write like Pope, the orthodoxy which condemned Swinburne because he was unchristian, the orthodoxy which in our own day invented the ignorant word ‘*escapist*’ and pretends that social consciousness is the criterion of art. And so we are in danger of demanding, as authoritarians do, that an artist fall in with our platoon, or of insisting that he must be in our sense a good citizen before we will regard him as a good artist. In fact it is probably desirable that an artist should be, as a man, a good citizen; that he should

obey the laws and fight his country's enemies and care for the happiness of the people. It is probably desirable that he should do these things because, if he does them, the experience may be valuable to him, and, if he does not, he may fall into opposition to the State and waste his energies either in exile or in struggles important to him as a man but irrelevant to him as an artist. But though good citizenship may be desirable in him, it is evidently not always so; certainly we are not qualified to define good citizenship for him and to reject him, as an artist, because as a man he does not conform to our definition. Do we condemn Thomas Mann because by Nazi standards he has not been a good citizen of his own German state? Do we exclude Shelley because, as a citizen, his behaviour was extremely odd? No: we may enforce our laws upon the man but not our opinions upon the artist. And he, in his turn, must understand that, though he is entitled to express his opinions, he is no more entitled to drill the community than the community is entitled to drill the artist in him. He is entitled to express his opinions if the subject of those opinions is what at the moment stirs his aesthetic passion; in this way, great religious poetry has been produced; but woe to him if his art does not transcend his didacticism and carry him away from it and beyond it! Woe even to Shelley if he had not so often and so gloriously forgotten to be a propagandist! Immortality is not to be voted at a political meeting. Posterity will not stay in any man's school. We are wilful and enchanted children, by the grace of God. Our

school-classes and our schoolbooks and our school-rewards and punishments matter very little to us in the end. For an hour or two we may earnestly concern ourselves with them, and turn our solemn, communal eyes on the teacher who presides over these things; but what in our heart of hearts we want to know about is the world beyond this classroom of his. He whom we love and remember is not he who thrusts upon us his own dusty chart of the Supreme Reality, scored over with his arguments, prejudices and opinions; nor he who will draw a map of heaven on the blackboard and chastise us with scorpions if we will not fall down and worship it; but he who will pull the curtain away from the classroom window and let us see our own heaven with our own eyes. And this enablement of mankind, I take to be the function of true education, for the very word means a leading-out, and to lead out the spirit of man, through the wise, liberating self-discipline of learning and wonder, has been the glory of great teachers and of great Universities since civilization began to flower.

We are citizens, but we are men and women; we are men and women, but we are spirits. We live in the spirit, though we are instructed in the mind—

The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find;  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds and other seas.

And to these, and to the truth that dwells in them, we come not by instruction but by vision, the vision that penetrates to the spirit through the senses. Shelley

knew; he stopped preaching and drew attention to something that was not a bird and far transcended the skylark. Keats knew: he did not preach at all, and in his vision forgot even the nightingale. And Hardy knew:

Love is, yea, a great thing,  
 A great thing to me,  
 When, having drawn across the lawn  
 In darkness silently,  
 A figure flits like one a-wing  
 Out from the nearest tree:  
 O love is, yes, a great thing  
 A great thing to me!  
 Will these be always great things,  
 Great things to me? . . .  
 Let it befall that One will call,  
 'Soul I have need of thee':  
 What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,  
 Love, and its ecstasy,  
 Will always have been great things,  
 Great things to me!

So let us not, ladies and gentlemen, think too communally on the relationship of the artist and the community, for along that path of thought lie the gauleiters on the one hand and the commissars on the other. What then? As you like it or what you will.

. . . Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,  
 Love, and its ecstasy . . .

skylarks, nightingales! Take them, but take them into yourselves. Give the artist freedom that he may discover; preserve yourselves in freedom that you may receive and re-create. Go out and find him.

You will recognize a true artist easily enough nowadays, for he will not be wearing a party-badge:

'Tis the man who with a bird,  
Wren, or Eagle, finds his way to  
All its instincts; he hath heard  
The Lion's roaring, and can tell  
What his horny throat expresseth  
And to him the Tiger's yell  
Comes articulate and presseth  
On his ear like mother-tongue.

That is the artist. You are the community. Lions and skylarks, tigers and nightingales, eagles and wrens, love and its ecstasy—all are subjects of art and all are at your disposal. But do not conscribe them. Do not bring them into the classroom and stuff them and stick labels on them—for, to do that, you must kill them first. Go out and find them.

The lecture, thank heaven, is over. The specimens are all packed away in their boxes. Shall we go out into Vanity Fair, and tell stories, or live them? The classroom door is open, as in a free University the classroom door always is, but let us beware of the fierce, solemn little men who say that they have been given the keys.

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LXV

TWO CENTURIES OF  
JOHNSONIAN SCHOLARSHIP



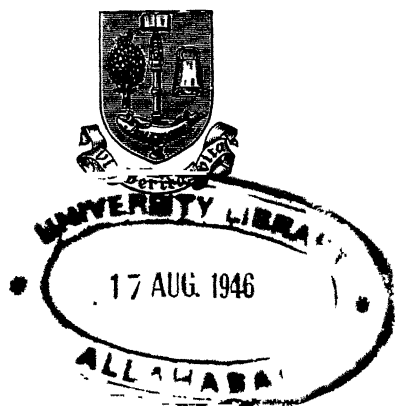
# Two Centuries of Johnsonian Scholarship

*Being the twelfth Lecture on the David Murray  
Foundation in the University of Glasgow  
delivered on May 3rd, 1945*

*by*

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My title contains, I believe, no more than a pardonable exaggeration. It describes my subject as having a span of two centuries. Johnson died in 1784. But the history of Johnsonian research goes further back. His early life, and much of his early writing, were obscure, and began to excite curiosity as soon as his Rambler, his Dictionary, and his edition of Shakespeare had made him famous. Now Johnson, though his memory was prodigiously retentive, and though he entertained a design, never executed, of collecting his works, was grandly careless of the details of his life and writings. He had moreover a certain love of mystery, best known by the famous story of his orange peelings. You will find it in Boswell under an appropriate date : the first of April, 1775.

Next morning I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk, by asking him as to one of his particularities, which her Ladyship laid I durst not do. It seems he had been frequently observed at the Club to put into his pocket the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them ; and this was the bold question to be put. I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels nicely scraped and cut into pieces. ' O, Sir, (said I,) I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the Club.' Johnson : ' I have a great love for them.' Boswell : ' And pray, Sir, what do you do with them? You scrape them, it seems, very neatly, and what next?' Johnson : ' I let them dry,

Sir.' Boswell : ' And what next ? ' Johnson : ' Nay, Sir, you shall know their fate no further.' Boswell : ' Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said (assuming a mock solemnity) he scraped them, and let them dry, but what he did with them next, he never could be prevailed upon to tell ! ' Johnson : ' Nay, Sir, you should say it more emphatically:—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell.'

Johnson's disciples were therefore constrained to reconstruct their subject by methods not unlike those of historical research. Sometimes Johnson was induced to create an authentic document. Thus he gave Boswell a dated list of his London habitations. We owe to Boswell's assiduity his two most famous letters. The letter to Chesterfield seems to have perished. The letter to James Macpherson has, surprisingly, survived ; but neither Johnson nor Boswell could know that. Boswell was able to publish both because, after much procrastination, Johnson was persuaded to dictate them from memory.

The canon of Johnson's published works, which has received many additions in the present century, and is still far from completion, began to be formed in his lifetime. His early journalism, by which he lived for the best part of twenty years, was all anonymous. His own contribution to its authentication was slight. But there is some evidence that he hoped to do more. He received his pension in 1762 ; but not until 1765 did he rid himself of that painful hangover from the days of his poverty, his edition of Shakespeare. ' A man ', he once said, ' is to have part of his life to himself.' At the age of fifty-five Johnson found himself at last a man of

leisure, responsible only to his conscience. Now in 1767, when he reprinted his *Idlers*, he appended to them two magazine-articles, the *Essay on Epitaphs* and the *Dissertation on the Epitaphs written by Pope*. When, in the same year, he reprinted the *Life of Savage*, he added his Lives of Blake and Drake. This looks like the beginnings of a collection. If so, he carried it no further. That was left to other scholars, of whom the first and the most assiduous was Boswell.

Boswell was not very well equipped for the task. He was no more than a fair scholar and critic, and his knowledge of the miscellaneous literature between 1738, when Johnson published his *London, a Poem*, and 1762, was superficial. Boswell had a good deal of Latin and a smattering of Greek. But he could not follow his master into the darker places of antiquity. Still less could he follow him in the literature of the continental renaissance. I remark in passing that Johnson's biographers tell us hardly anything of his interest in that vast and now neglected region. That Johnson was profoundly versed in modern Latinity we know only from stray allusions and from the sale catalogue of his library.

But what Boswell lacked in knowledge and judgment he made up by industry and pertinacity. On 15 April 1773 he dined in Johnson's company. Johnson happened to mention 'one Angel, who came to me to write for him a Preface or Dedication to a book upon short hand'. Boswell was quick on the ball. 'Hearing now for the first time of this Preface or Dedication, I said, "What an expense,

Sir, do you put us to in buying books, to which you have written Prefaces or Dedications ”.’ The fruits of such research you will find in the ‘ Chronological Catalogue of the Prose Works of Samuel Johnson ’ which Boswell prefixed to the *Life*. In a footnote he adds : ‘ I do not here include his Poetical Works ; for . . . I have promised a complete édition of them, in which I shall with the utmost care ascertain their authenticity, and illustrate them with notes and various readings.’ Brave words! This was one of the many books which Boswell did not write. But his note is of interest as showing his conception of the scholarly nature of his task. Of the prose works he did, to the best of his ability, ‘ ascertain the authenticity’. He distinguished the pieces which Johnson had acknowledged to himself from those which (not always correctly) he assigned to Johnson on internal evidence.

But the republication of Johnson’s works had begun much earlier. In the autumn of 1773, you will remember, Johnson was out of the way—safe here in Scotland. ‘ Do you not long’, wrote Steevens to Garrick, ‘ to hear the roarings of the old lion, over the bleak mountains of the North?’ Johnson had left behind him in London one Davies, of whom he later wrote that ‘ Mr Davies has had great success as an authour, generated by the corruption of a bookseller’. But in 1773 Davies was not yet a bankrupt. Seizing his opportunity, he produced a book in two volumes, *Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces*, which is in all but name a collection

of Johnson's minor prose. Johnson resented this piece of impudence, though his anger was as usual short-lived, and we do not know that he condescended to any particular comment. But no doubt the book provoked discussion, and gave Boswell an excuse for asking questions.

Soon after Johnson's death there appeared a rather perfunctory edition of his poems, and several *Lives* that are not much better. But the booksellers in combination commissioned his old friend and executor, Sir John Hawkins, to write his life and edit his works. The edition, of which the *Life* forms part, consists in the main of pieces notoriously Johnson's. It fills eleven substantial volumes, though it includes nothing of the *Dictionary*, or of the edition of *Shakespeare*, except their prefaces. The editor of the Latin poems, now first collected and largely first published, was Johnson's friend Bennet Langton, to whom, writes Hawkins, 'the originals . . . were by him delivered, with directions to publish them'. Langton was a good classical scholar. In the course of a few years Hawkins was followed by a number of editors. The *Parliamentary Debates*, reprinted from *The Gentleman's Magazine*, fill two volumes. Two other supplementary volumes made good many of Hawkins's omissions of minor pieces. Two more contained sermons, 'left for publication' by Johnson's bucolic friend the Rev. John Taylor, but manifestly composed by Johnson. Finally George Strahan published the strange and moving collection to which he gave the title *Prayers and Meditations*. Johnson had in his last days entrusted

the MSS. of these to Strahan. He cannot have gone through them with any care, for they include autobiographical entries, some intimate, some trivial, of which he cannot have intended the publication. Strahan, happily, printed them almost without omission.

Johnson was a very great writer. But like almost all great writers who live to be old, he wrote more than, if we are free to choose, we shall wish to read. The accumulation of his minor works is inevitable. Human curiosity will not be denied, and the flame of learning is fanned by the breeze of novelty. But such accumulation may be thought a necessary evil. Certainly our great debt to Boswell and his successors is not for their labours on the canon. It is for their preservation and reconstruction of his life, which is the indispensable background of his incomparable talk and of his familiar letters, which are not incomparable, but are illuminated by the same wisdom, wit and honesty. If, of Johnson's published works, we are content to read only the best, we shall still have ample food for reflection and powerful stimulus to inquiry : in Boswell's phrase, ' bark and steel for the mind '.

I suppose it is now agreed that Boswell was a man of outstanding genius. I think him the most extraordinary man—I do not say the greatest man—whom Scotland has produced. The recovery of his long-lost journals revealed him in his true stature. Long stretches of them are tedious ; much of them is almost intolerably painful. They tell a long and squalid story of ambition, frustration and incont-

ence. Morally Boswell was a very weak man ; intellectually he was not eminent. But he was a man of prodigious vitality. His life, in its periods of energy, was not a stream but a torrent. In the width of his interests and sympathies, in the intensity of his passion for record, his longing to live a full life and at the same time to catch it on the wing and pin it to paper, in the concentration of his mind upon his own character and his power of objectifying it, he towers high above all comparable figures. It is this combination of qualities that makes him the greatest of biographers. But these qualities, though they made a great work of art, could not without something more make a book of enduring and almost universal popularity. That something is supplied by his humanity : by his inexhaustible good humour (the secret of the limpid simplicity of his style) and his gift for forgetting himself in his love for others—a gift that produced unfailing benevolence and even, intermittently, good works. It is this that gives his journals sweetness and light.

*The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., comprehending an Account of his Studies and numerous Works, in chronological Order ; a Series of his epistolary Correspondence and Conversations with many eminent Persons ; and various original Pieces of his Composition, never before published : the Whole exhibiting a View of Literature and literary Men in Great Britain, for near Half a Century, during which he flourished is a work which has three main elements : Johnson's letters and other documents ; Johnson's life before Boswell met him in 1763, and thereafter when they were*

apart ; and finally the record of their life together. This last amounts to rather more than two years, out of the seventy-five of Johnson's life and the twenty-one of their friendship, in the sense that for some twenty-six months they were in reach of each other, in London or elsewhere. For about three months in all they were sleeping in the same houses, most of them in Scotland. For the rest their intercourse was discontinuous. How many hours they spent in each other's company cannot be exactly computed ; but that space of time is a startlingly small fraction of the whole. For the first of these three elements, the documents, Boswell deserves no more than the credit of a careful editor. The second element is a painstaking work, compiled by skilful interrogation of its subject—Johnson himself—and by laborious consultation of many men and books. The third constitutes virtually the whole of the *Tour to the Hebrides*, and by far the greater part of the *Life* proper. This is the record of what Johnson did and said in Boswell's presence. Such is the power of Boswell's wizardry that the reader scarcely notices the enormous disparity between part and whole, or notices it only to rejoice.

The Journals, out of which this vital part of Boswell's book was made, disappeared, and for a century were believed to have perished. In fact they seem to have survived almost entire, except for certain leaves which Boswell tore from his notebooks and sent to his printer as copy for the *Life*. The story of the finding of the journals, first in Ireland and later in Scotland, has been told in a manner

worthy of its romantic interest, and I must not allow myself to be seduced from my theme. Of the editing of these journals in our own time I shall have something to say later.

Boswell's journals began in 1761, when he was not yet of age, and ended in 1794, a year before his death. They are full of gaps, due to preoccupation, indolence, and melancholia. They vary from rough and cryptic jottings to a polished narrative. The legend (it was little more) that Boswell wrote down men's conversation in their presence has been exploded. His normal practice was to make notes, in what he called 'a kind of shorthand' before he went (drunk or sober) to bed, or at latest next morning. These notes he habitually—but by no means invariably—expanded later into something that would always be intelligible to himself. Very often this second version was further clarified and elaborated in a fair copy. The relation of Boswell's papers to the published *Life of Johnson* is now clear. From an early date Boswell designed that work. But with the exception of one small notebook—'the little Book of Notes for Dr Johnson's Life'—he kept no notes directed exclusively to that end. His journals are strictly chronological, and Johnson rubs shoulders in them with a host of characters, from George III and Voltaire to prostitutes and convicts. We know from Boswell's will, and from the subsequent correspondence of his embarrassed executors, that he regarded many of his materials as fit for publication. Many of them were, I think, written with some idea of ultimate publication. It

is almost by a happy accident that, in the event, only the Johnsonian records were so used. For the journals are all of a piece. The Johnsonian passages differ from the others, and surpass them, only in virtue of their subject. Johnson was the best and greatest thing in Boswell's life, and the stimulus of their association was the sharpest that ever urged him to creative record. The result is not only a work of artistic genius ; it is at the same time a monument of historical learning. The qualities of the journals—the accurate memory, the zeal for verbal exactness, the sure instinct for selection and arrangement—are closely analogous to the qualities with which great historians are endowed.

When Johnson died Boswell was not yet forty-five. But his excesses had impaired a constitution of steel and rubber. His professional career, since his move from Edinburgh to London, had ended in fiasco. His fond political ambitions remained unsatisfied. Though he had succeeded to his father's estate at Auchinleck, his affairs were embarrassed. His wife, on whose devotion he leaned heavily, was dying by inches. He was a tired, disappointed, impoverished, and profoundly melancholy man, whom only drink or the excitement of company could rouse from torpor. On hearing of Johnson's death he noted 'that there would be considerable expectations from me of *Memoirs of my illustrious Friend*, but that habits of indolence and dejection of spirit would probably hinder me from laudable exertion'. The solicitations of publishers, however, and the threat of rival biographies, moved him to

action along the line of least resistance. The journal of the Hebridean tour was a continuous and tidy manuscript, nearly all of which had been read and approved by Johnson. It needed only pruning, and Boswell decided to publish it separately. He was lucky in securing the collaboration of Edmond Malone, the accomplished Shakespearian. In the preparation both of *Tour* and *Life* Malone kept Boswell's nose to the grindstone, and gave him help and encouragement without which he must have fallen by the way. Between them they cut down the MS. of the *Tour* by excising Boswell's intimate revelations of his own escapades and reflections. Boswell was sometimes reluctant to use the knife, but Malone prevailed. The complete MS. has been published, and the curious reader will find in it much fresh entertainment ; but he may probably think that the abridgement made a better book.

But Boswell's task was only begun. The materials for the rest of Johnson's life were in a very different state. The records of their meetings in London, Ashbourne, Oxford and elsewhere were scattered among Boswell's numerous notebooks and his innumerable loose scraps, so that the mere finding and arranging them was a terrifying labour. On one day in 1786 he notes 'Sorted till I was stupefied'. He was very near despair. He 'sauntered into various Coffee-houses, seeking rest and finding none . . . the tears run down my cheeks'. Again he writes that he came to his 'solitary house, drearily, as to a prison'. Even at the height of his powers he might well have quailed at what lay

before him. His notes concerned a great number of persons, books, and events that called for inquiry or verification. The part of the book that lay outside their scope was almost untouched. Again Malone came to his rescue and lent him courage for the work. For five years he toiled, with grim though fitful resolution. That a book so full of life and light and colour should be born of collaboration between an antiquary and a worn-out rake seems paradoxical. But its best and brightest parts were in fact not so produced. The journals were almost pure gold ; the ore needed little refining. When the discovery was made of a large part of the MS. that Boswell and Malone sent to the printer, long stretches of it were found to consist of leaves torn from the journals and but little altered. One change was a master-stroke. In the journals, Johnson's talk is all reported in the third person. A single vivifying touch transformed this into the *ipsissima verba* that we know so well.

Boswell lived to publish a second edition, with substantial additions and corrections, and to make collections for a third. This, and several later editions, were in Malone's hands. Malone was scrupulous in the execution of his trust, and would do nothing to the book that his friend would not have done himself. Thus, while he inserted fresh letters as they came to light, he added little by way of comment, and did nothing to explain allusions which Boswell had left purposely obscure. When, forty years after the first edition, John Wilson Croker set himself the task of producing a new Boswell, there

was much to do, and not a little for which he came too late. But he was a hard and rapid worker, and he quickly produced an edition of great and enduring value ; a work unjustly, and I fear unscrupulously, vilified by Macaulay in that notorious review. Croker's book was a bold experiment. What he produced was more than an edition of Boswell ; it was a life of Johnson *variorum*, of which Boswell was only the leading author. He transferred the *Tour* to its place in the narrative of 1773 : a useful piece of restoration, which readers (if not editors) may well follow. Macaulay condemned it, on the ground that Johnson had read the *Tour* but had not read the *Life*. Surely this was little better than a quibble. Croker introduced also, in their chronological places, not only fresh letters of Johnson, but also copious extracts from other and rival authorities : from Mrs Piozzi's *Anecdotes* of 1786 ; Johnson's letters to Mrs Thrale published by Mrs Piozzi in 1788 and deliberately eschewed by Boswell, whether as being another's copyright or for personal reasons ; from Sir John Hawkins's *Life*, and a host of minor authorities. Croker and his publisher, John Murray, were driven from this position by Macaulay's shock tactics ; but I am not sure that Croker was wrong. Certainly an edition *variorum* is not the edition for the common reader. But in a work of reference there is much to be said for the method. If, as Johnson once quoted, chronology is the eye of history, it is equally the eye of biography ; in fact, all editors of Boswell have done much as Croker did, except that they have printed subsidiary authori-

ties not in the text but in footnotes. Croker cannot with any show of justice be convicted of misleading his readers ; all his intercalations are duly bracketed, and the source indicated in the outer margin ; they are footnotes in all but form, and are almost as readily skipped. The crying need of Johnsonian scholarship today is some sort of index to the vast, and rapidly expanding, literature of the subject. I desiderate a *Clavis Johnsoniana*, a skeleton chart of his life, in which for every year, for every month, often for every day, would be indicated what was done or said or written, with references to the works in which the *acta*, *dicta*, *scripta* may be found. You will smile at this ritual observance, this codification of hero-worship. But similar works have been offered at the shrine of Shakespeare. A good many people do, for lack of such a guide, spend a great deal of time hunting in books or their indexes ; and hardly a month passes that I do not write a letter telling where this or that is to be found, or that I have failed to find it.

Croker's experiment has not been repeated. For the last hundred years the stream of Johnsonian lore has flowed in three main channels. The first is Boswell's *Life* as he and Malone left it in the third edition, with various commentary. The second is those of Johnson's letters which were not included in Boswell's third edition. Except for Mrs Piozzi's edition, in 1788, of letters to the Thrales, these were first collected by Birkbeck Hill in 1892. His chief single source was Mrs Piozzi ; but many other letters, unknown to the early Johnsonians,

had come to light : notably those to his mother and her daughter and to John Taylor. Thus Johnson's letters have never been edited as a whole. This is I think unfortunate ; and for the last twenty-five years I have been amassing the materials of such an edition, which I do not despair of completing. The reputation of Johnson's letters has been overshadowed by the reputation of his talk. English is rich in good letters, as in those other forms of undress literature, the diary and the private autobiography. But of authentic recorded talk the sum total is very small. Boswell's talent was perhaps unique in kind; his exercise of it was on a scale that has no parallel. This has made us more intimately acquainted with Johnson than with any other character in history. That is why few readers are aware how much of Boswell's book is, in fact, made up of letters. The third branch of the stream is the miscellaneous collection which since Croker first edited it in 1836 has been generally known as the *Johnsoniana*. In this the most important element is Johnson's own. Besides the *Prayers and Meditations* he left a number of autobiographical scraps, including a fragmentary account of his childhood. The 'Book of remarks' which he wrote in the Hebrides, and which, with his letters to Mrs Thrale, was the raw material of his *Journey*, has unhappily perished. Mrs Piozzi in 1786 published her *Anecdotes* of Johnson. This little book came hard on the heels of the *Tour*, and five years before Boswell was ready with the *Life*. It is his only serious rival as a record of Johnson's talk. Its accuracy was challenged by Boswell, and

has been doubted ever since. But recent research has enhanced the lady's reputation for essential truth. Mrs Thrale began in 1776 to compile what she called *Thraliana*, a commonplace book of a very personal kind, much of which is virtually diary. She kept it up till 1809, when she had filled six large volumes. From the earlier volumes, which are the main source of her *Anecdotes*, tantalizing extracts had been published from time to time. The MS. was at last acquired by the Huntington Library and admirably edited by an American scholar, Miss Katharine Balderston. We now know, from the dating, that many of the sayings were written down while they were fresh in Mrs Thrale's memory. The rest of *Johnsoniana* is made up of extracts from Fanny Burney's diaries, Sir John Hawkins's ponderous *Life of Johnson*, and a multitude of minor sources. The collection was last edited by Birkbeck Hill in 1897, as *Johnsonian Miscellanies*.

Perhaps it is time to remind ourselves that in his own day Johnson was chiefly esteemed as poet, lexicographer, moralist, biographer and critic. But the later history of his works is soon told. In his lifetime he was never a very popular writer. Only some 4000 copies were sold of his *Journey*. Even *Rasselas* and *The Rambler* had no sensational sale. But his reputation was great, and for forty years after his death the possession, if not the perusal, of his *Works* was a common object of ambition. About 1825 he was dethroned by the Romantics, and his works have not since been edited as a whole. The early editors added something to the

canon, but hardly attempted comment. There is still no adequate index to the works, though there are full indexes to his literary criticism. In the last half-century Johnson's reputation as a writer has gradually emerged from a long eclipse. In 1905 Birkbeck Hill produced an elaborate edition of *The Lives of the Poets*, which resumed their place as an indispensable weapon in the armoury of literary students. A few years later your own Walter Raleigh published a short book of essays which did much to restore Johnson to his true place among the giants. Quite lately another Scot, Professor David Nichol Smith, has produced, with the assistance of an American, an exemplary edition of the Poems. I suspect that Raleigh, as a Johnsonian, owed more than has been realized to his younger colleague. Nichol Smith's early lectures on Johnson were a new light to his Oxford audience, and in the course of years the beam has illumined two continents. But it is still true that, except for *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a few of the *Lives*, and the *Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson is not very widely read. I wish I could think that every student of this University—at least every Highlander and Islander—knew the *Journey to the Western Islands*, a book packed with wisdom, which you can read in an hour or two, and of which I never tire. Johnson's remarks on political economy have often been derided. But a good judge once told me that the *Journey* is the best thing ever written about the economic history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

For half a century Croker's edition of Boswell held the field. The next great landmark in Boswellian scholarship is George Birkbeck Hill's edition of 1887. Hill brought to his task what is more important than anything else, an exceptional degree of accuracy. It is hardly possible to find, in all his volumes, a wrong date or a false reference. He was widely read in the literature of the age, and the parallels he adduces, if not always strictly relevant, are almost always welcome. He had also a just appreciation of Boswell's genius and of Johnson's greatness as a writer, both of which were then obscured by the clouds of ignorance and prejudice. But Hill, like Macaulay, was 'a vile Whig'; neither could forget Johnson's Toryism, or forgive Croker's. Though Hill did not defer to all Macaulay's judgements, he adopted his view of Croker. No reader of Hill's edition will get an inkling of the merits of Croker's, to which Hill owed more than he owned, doubtless more than he knew. Not the least valuable part of Hill's work is the index, which seldom fails the inquirer. It has been said that a man armed with this weapon can in an afternoon prepare an effective speech on almost any subject.

Another half century passed, and Hill's edition was exhausted. The next edition—for it deserves to rank as substantive—is the revision of Hill by Dr Lawrence F. Powell. When Dr Powell was entrusted with the work he was directed to respect the integrity of Hill's, and to conduct his additions and corrections with the machinery of appendixes and brackets. This decision, for which I will not

conceal my responsibility, has been criticized ; but I still think it was right. If the pagination had been altered, the new edition would have been out of gear with the whole corpus of Johnsonian literature accumulated in the preceding fifty years, all of which referred to Hill's pages. Until the editors of English prose classics apprehend the necessity of equipping their texts with a permanent system of reference, such as the ancient authors have enjoyed for centuries, this dilemma will recur.

Dr Powell's primary instruction was to verify the text. He has in many places restored a true reading of the first edition where Hill had overlooked it. He was also given a free hand with the commentary, and has enriched it by taking account of all the Johnsonian and Boswellian texts and studies<sup>\*</sup> published since 1887. His outstanding achievement is the identification of many persons whom Boswell refrained from naming and whom Croker's inquiries had left obscure. The first four volumes of the new edition, that is the *Life* proper, appeared in 1934. There remain the *Tour to the Hebrides* and the index-volume. The long delay, of which subscribers have not failed to complain, has been due to a number of causes. Dr Powell is a busy librarian. He found, moreover, that Hill's edition of the *Tour* is greatly inferior to his edition of the *Life*. Hill did indeed retrace Johnson's *Footsteps in Scotland*, and picked up some local traditions<sup>1</sup>. But his knowledge of the Highlands and Islands remained

\* <sup>1</sup> Dr Powell reminds me that Hill visited Scotland *after* editing the *Tour*, though before editing the (non-Boswellian) letters.

superficial, as did his knowledge of Scottish letters. He was not at home in the Edinburgh of Hume and Robertson, in the Glasgow of Adam Smith, as he was in the London of Gibbon and Walpole. Dr Powell has made good these defects by frequent and protracted sojourns in this country and by constant communication with your scholars. I can promise you that when the state of the world permits at last the publication of the *Tour*, which is already in print, and of the index, which is far advanced, you will find rich entertainment in the one and the means, in the other, of almost infinite reference.

I can make only cursory mention of some of the works used by Dr Powell in his revision. Mr Alleyn Lyell Reade, first drawn to the subject by a connexion between his family and Johnson's, pursued it later in a series, *Johnsonian Gleanings*, which now extends to nine quarto volumes of the most rigorous genealogical inquiry. His greatest stroke was his demonstration that the entries in the books of Pembroke College, which had been thought to prove Johnson's continued residence (beyond his first year), in fact prove the contrary; they were fines for non-appearance on stated occasions. The late Robert Borthwick Adam of Buffalo had published an elaborate catalogue of his unrivalled collection of Johnsonian books and MSS. The late W. P. Courtney, with Prof. Nichol Smith's help, had produced the first full-dress bibliography of Johnson's writings. The sixth Marquis of Lansdowne had found and published Johnson's letters to

‘Queeney’ Thrale, long hidden and forgotten at Tullyallan on the shore of the Forth.

But the biggest haul, the richest literary *trouvaille* of our time, was the Boswell Papers. The credit of divining their survival, and of verifying his guess, goes to Prof. C. B. Tinker of Yale, the *doyen* of eighteenth-century studies in America. The greater part were found at Malahide near Dublin, and were carried off by another American gentleman, a soldier, in the last war, of the British army, Colonel Ralph Isham, whose generosity has made scholars free of these treasures. The editing was first entrusted to Geoffrey Scott, who died just when he was well in his stride. He was succeeded by Prof. Frederick Pottle, a pupil of Prof. Tinker’s, and a Doctor of Laws of this University : *quem honoris causa nomino*. The herculean labours of Scott and Pottle rapidly produced an edition in eighteen sumptuous volumes, and these were followed by the *Tour to the Hebrides*, by Pottle with the collaboration of Mr Charles Bennett. We are promised at an early date a popular edition of the journals, and ultimately a critical edition, which will make British scholarship look to its laurels. Some years after the discoveries at Malahide, a different clue led Prof. Collier Abbott to Fettercairn in Kincardineshire, where he found, *inter alia*, the missing journal of 1762–3, which contains the record of Boswell’s first meeting with Johnson, and a hundred of the Johnson letters printed by Boswell in the *Life*—but not, alas, Johnson’s letters to Boswell. The ownership of the Fettercairn papers is still in a degree *sub*

*judice* ; but Prof. Abbott's shapely catalogue, with its brilliant introduction, affords a Pisgah-sight. All these editors have shown themselves worthy of their privilege. Scott's volume on *The Making of the Life*, and Pottle's introductions to later volumes, are masterpieces of critical and psychological analysis.

A classical scholar, having noted the title of this lecture, and heard it thus far, might be surprised that he has heard as yet barely a mention of textual criticism. The reason is a conspiracy of silence, which I have sometimes, but with singular lack of success, tried to break. The art of textual criticism, of which conjectural emendation is the culmination, was in Johnson's time so highly esteemed that it was still styled 'criticism' without qualification. Johnson was justly sceptical of his own and other men's attempts to correct the text of Shakespeare. Yet in his *Preface* he disclaims any 'intention to depreciate a study, that has exercised so many mighty minds, from the revival of learning to our own age, from the Bishop of *Aleria* to English *Bentley*.' He applied it in his own reading of contemporary authors. One rainy day, in the Hebrides, he read a phrase, meaningless in its context : 'even in engines' ; and called on Boswell to emend it. Boswell was able to see that it should be 'ever in enigmas'. 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'you are a good critick.' Now the modern editors of English authors do, of course, collate one text with another. But having done that they appear to assume, at least when they are editing books in prose published after, say, 1700, either that the text resulting from collation (if any) is

sound, or that, if it is unsound, it is useless, if not improper, to try to correct it. The first position has only to be stated to reveal its absurdity ; every book, every newspaper, reminds us of human fallibility. The second position, I venture to suggest, arises from cowardice. Perhaps you will forgive me if, to enforce my point, I repeat a personal anecdote already in print. In the year 1918 a copy was sent to me, in the wilds of Macedonia, of the first edition of Johnson's *Journey*. I read it with delight ; and having seen reason to suspect its text, beguiled the long, hot summer days by trying to put it right. The corruptions were simple and easily emended. Thus describing a storm at sea, Johnson appears to write this :

The master knew not well whither to go ; and our difficulties might perhaps have filled a very pathetick page, had not Mr. *Maclean* of *Col*, who, with every other qualification which insular life requires, in a very active and skilful manner, piloted us safe into his own harbour.

This, you see, is ungrammatical. Johnson wrote, of course, not 'in a very active and skilful manner', but 'is a very active and skilful mariner'. It was not until my return to England that I learned that perfect copies of the first edition have an errata-leaf, which corrects ten misreadings of Johnson's autograph. The corrections were, as I have said, exceedingly simple—child's play to a trained performer. But I confess I was pleased to find that I had detected and corrected *all* the errata.

My story has a moral ; indeed it has several. In the first place, it shows that emendation can be

successfully applied to modern texts. Secondly, it suggests an important difference between ancient texts and those modern texts which have been printed under the author's supervision. In the latter case, much more than in the former, the glaring error is almost sure to be corrected; that is, in proof. It is the plausible reading—the reading that is almost sense, or that *is* sense, though not the sense intended—that escapes the author's attention. It follows that in emending modern texts the difficulty is not so much to make the necessary correction as to divine that the text is at fault, that, as Housman quotes in praise of Bentley, 'thou ailest here, and here.'<sup>1</sup> A third point: the scholars of the Renaissance were used to have their conjectures confirmed, or oftener condemned, by the discovery of better manuscripts. Johnson quotes Scaliger: 'Illudunt nobis conjecturae nostrae, quarum nos pudet, posteaquam in meliores codices incidimus.' That can hardly happen to a classical scholar today, except when a new papyrus is found to elate or discomfit him. To a critic of modern texts it can still less often happen, except by such an accident as I have narrated; unless indeed one deliberately refrains from looking at a manuscript which one knows to be accessible—a practice in which I have indulged myself. Only in these ways can the efficacy of textual emendation be demonstrated; it would otherwise remain a matter of opinion.

Corruption is most frequent in posthumous works, not corrected by their authors; of these,

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from Arnold's 'Memorial Verses'.

letters are the largest class. In the course of editing Johnson's letters I have published some emendations, which seem to have fallen on deaf ears ; at least I have heard no comment. One or two of my emendations have been proved right by the discovery of the holograph ; one, in Boswell's *Tour*, was wrong, but was an attempt to cure a corruption which had not been suspected ; one or two were proved to be misguided. But though emendation by conjecture has been a relatively small part of my activities, my study of the originals has shown again and again that printers and editors can misread their documents. Johnson wrote a beautiful hand ; but it is often careless, and is always, to the unpractised eye, deceptive. There are errors in our printed texts which it is not very difficult to correct ; there are others which might elude a Bentley. Writing to Mrs Thrale from Newcastle, on his way to Scotland, Johnson makes a remark which is printed thus in the edition of 1788 :

One town, one country, is very like another . . . there are indeed minute discriminations both of places and manners, which perhaps are not wanting of curiosity.

Here I made the necessary correction, and was proved right when, years later, a photograph of the original reached me from Philadelphia. Johnson had written ' not unworthy of curiosity '.

In the same edition Johnson is made to call the island of Raasay ' that wilderness of life '. This I think should have been suspected, though I did not suspect it ; for Johnson is the most accurate of writers, and ' wilderness of life ' is very near a

contradiction in terms. Raasay was 'that wild recess of life'.

Writing to Warren Hastings, Johnson hopes that his illustrious correspondent 'will examine nicely the traditions and histories of the East ; that he will survey the wonders of its ancient edifices, and trace the vestiges of its ruined cities'. So it is in Boswell. A very acute critic might possibly have detected a lack of the usual Johnsonian symmetry : 'vestiges' is concrete ; 'wonders' is properly abstract. If he was aware that in Johnson's hand *w* is almost identical with *re*, he might have been moved to conjecture that Johnson wrote not 'wonders' but 'remains'. He would not have been believed, perhaps would not have deserved belief. But he would have been right.

Finally, there are errors which no human power can detect. You will remember that when Johnson dined with Lord Monboddo at his house in the country, they 'disputed in adjusting the claims of merit between a Shopkeeper of London, and a Savage of the American wilderness.' This is beyond all cavil. But Johnson in fact wrote not 'disputed' but merely 'differed'.

Now I do not suggest that the texts of those authors into whose secrets I have pried are so gravely erroneous as to impair the general reader's enjoyment or edification. Still less do I suggest that the general reader set up as a textual critic, an ambition of which he might probably fail. But if we are to produce elaborate editions of these authors ; if we are to produce, as we continue to do

for Johnson and Boswell, many volumes of biography, commentary, subsidiary documents and criticism of every *other* kind, then I think it not creditable to our scholarship that it should acquiesce in texts which give us, not very seldom, what is either nonsense or a sense not intended by the author. Conjectural criticism is not of the first importance ; but neither is it negligible.

*Quousque tandem?* Fatigued by my long catalogue, you may well ask if this huge apparatus was necessary to the appreciation of two writers whose books were written, not so very long ago, in almost modern English, deal with common themes, and offer no unusual obstacles to understanding. Certainly it was not necessary to that end. I would echo Birkbeck Hill's advice, that he ' who reads the *Life of Johnson* for the first time should read it in one of the *Pre-Crokerian* editions . . . with his attention undiverted by notes.' Hill quotes Johnson's own memorable advice to the reader of Shakespeare :

Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption ; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.

But it is the privilege of great writers that they cannot be buried under the weight of erudition piled upon them. So, though it is not necessary to know more of Johnson and Boswell than they have told us themselves, it is impossible to know too much. The nearer we draw, the greater they are seen to be.

Johnson and Boswell may be called reciprocal

forces, impelling each other to an increased vitality. They have indeed become almost inseparable, or are to be separated only by an effort of the imagination. This may be illustrated by the fact that Boswell was not merely a recorder of Johnsonian wisdom, he was also its promoter. Many of the pearls of Johnson's talk with Boswell were generated by the irritant of Boswell's persistent questioning. Boswell's motive was not scholarly ; it was not always unselfish. Some of the topics on which he teased Johnson—death, and free will, and conjugal infidelity, and Scotland—were topics in which Boswell, for good or bad reasons, was intensely interested. The passion of his interest determined the nature of the record, and contributed not a little to the quality of the utterance recorded.

But we should beware of a dangerous fallacy. The old heresy—Macaulay's—that Boswell was a mere reporter is dead and buried. But the discovery, or rediscovery, of Boswell's genius gave birth to another and a more insidious superstition : that Boswell made Johnson seem greater than he was. Now it is true that Boswell improved upon his notes of Johnson's talk ; he permitted himself, not infrequently, to make a saying more characteristic, more typically Johnsonian, than it actually was. But every artist does things like this. Boswell's dexterous touching of Johnson's phrases no more distorts the picture than does his selection—his choice of what to record and what to omit.

Boswell's Johnson, then, is no more than Johnson ; and the truth is still what their contemporaries

knew : that Johnson towered high above his satellite. He did not 'invent' Boswell ; he did not make him out of nothing ; but he did transform him into something much larger than, without their association, he could ever have become.

Robert Orme, the historian of Hindostan, after reading the *Journey to the Western Islands*, made this remark to Boswell : ' There are in that book thoughts which, by long revolution in the mind of Johnson, have been formed and polished like pebbles in the ocean.' I offer you in conclusion one of these pebbles, as having a local relevance. I do not ask you to swallow it. But you may be willing to roll it in your mouths. I hope you will think that the asperity of its substance is at least mitigated by the smoothness of its form. The judgement, moreover, is remote in its temporal application, and scrupulous in the nicety of its discrimination.

Men bred in the universities of *Scotland* cannot be expected to be often decorated with the splendours of ornamental erudition, but they obtain a mediocrity of knowledge, between learning and ignorance, not inadequate to the purposes of common life, which is, I believe, very widely diffused among them, and which, countenanced in general by a national combination so invidious, that their friends cannot defend it, and actuated in particulars by a spirit of enterprise, so vigorous, that their enemies are constrained to praise it, enables them to find, or to make their way to employment, riches, and distinction.

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THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND  
BRITISH HISTORIANS



# The Norman Conquest and British Historians

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*by*

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## THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND BRITISH HISTORIANS

My purpose in this lecture is to consider a great and familiar event in British history; to illustrate how it has been regarded at various times by British historians; and to show how their conclusions were influenced not only by their own studies, but also by the circumstances in which they wrote. Such an investigation<sup>1</sup> is perhaps unusual, but I should like to claim for it a dual interest. It should concern students of medieval history as perhaps indicating profitable lines for future research, and it should also raise certain other related questions. How far in the light of the story I am about to tell can history be regarded as a dispassionate science? Have improvements in the technique of discovery always produced increased understanding? Can a people at any time be judged to some extent by the manner in which it regards its own past? Does a nation usually get the historians it deserves? The Norman Conquest has now engaged the constant attention of British historians, and inspired the voluminous production of English men of letters for more than four hundred years. A great turning-point in our history has perhaps naturally provoked

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Professor F. M. Stenton and Professor V. H. Galbraith for their kindness in criticising this lecture. It would be a poor return for their generosity if I were to imply that they are necessarily in agreement with all the opinions here expressed. For these I must hold myself responsible.

a mass of erudition which is staggering in its weight and bulk; but it is more surprising that a political crisis of the eleventh century should have led generations of statesmen and lawyers, pamphleteers and scribblers into a war of words about a subject which might well have been deemed to lie outside their interest. Here surely is a most curious phenomenon of British scholarship. And the end is not yet. To-day, although the Norman Conquest has been assiduously discussed for over four centuries, few periods in our history remain more controverted. That, in fact, is the sad and salutary paradox which I wish to pose to you this afternoon, and if possible to explain and resolve.

The modern literature of the Norman Conquest covers almost the whole span of English prose. Already in 1530 John Rastell gave the matter some attention in his *Pastyme of Peoples*,<sup>1</sup> and with the opening of the seventeenth century men of all sorts and conditions began zealously to discuss the history of eleventh-century England. In 1613 John Hayward produced what may be called the first textbook on the subject,<sup>2</sup> and shortly afterwards two very great scholars directed their energies to its investigation. In 1623 John Selden published his memorable edition of Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*,<sup>3</sup> and six

<sup>1</sup> Ed. 1811, pp. 137, 138.

<sup>2</sup> *The Lives of the III Normans, Kings of England, written by I.H.* The matter was also discussed in the *Breviary of the History of England*, printed in 1693, and attributed, wrongly as it seems, (cf. Hearne, *Collections*, x, p. 198) to Sir Walter Raleigh.

<sup>3</sup> The 'Notae et Spicilegium' are of particular value.

years later Sir Henry Spelman inaugurated the study of Anglo-Norman feudalism with his great essay on *Feuds and Tenures by Knight Service*.<sup>1</sup> A like concern with the legal antiquities of the eleventh century was shown after the Restoration by Dr. Robert Brady,<sup>2</sup> Physician in Ordinary to Charles II; and Matthew Hale, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, devoted to the same theme no less than forty pages of his remarkable *History of the Common Law*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, when in 1695 Sir William Temple issued his *Introduction to the History of England*, it was found that five-sixths of that book were concerned with the Norman Conquest, and during the eighteenth century Abraham Farley devoted forty years of his industrious life to produce in 1783 what is still the standard edition of Domesday Book.<sup>4</sup> Such erudition was not easy to master or imitate, but many rushed in where they might have feared to tread, and almost all the controversies of that disputatious age were adorned and disfigured by references to Anglo-Norman history. Writers like Fabian Phillipps<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Printed posthumously in *Reliquiae Spelmannianae*, edited by Edmund Gibson in 1698.

<sup>2</sup> For him and his work see Douglas, *English Scholars* (1939), pp. 154-160.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. 1739, pp. 70 *sqq.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. C. Webb, *A Short Account of Domesday with a View to its Publication* (1756); H. Ellis, *Introduction to Domesday*, vol. i (1833), p. 360.

<sup>5</sup> In particular, *The Established Government of England vindicated from all Popular and Republican Principles and Mistakes* (1687). This rare book is repulsive in style, but valuable in matter.

and William Prynne<sup>1</sup> found here plenty of material for scholarly dispute, and at the same time the story of the Conquest, duly coloured, was made available to the general reading public. Sir Roger de Coverley,<sup>2</sup> who placed the history of Sir Richard Baker<sup>3</sup> conveniently in his hall window, could read therein comfortably about the adventures of William the Conqueror, and the subject, differently embroidered, was later treated in the standard Whig histories of Echard and Tyrrell.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century the literature of the Norman Conquest had already grown to a vast size, and to explain this productive zeal it would be necessary to refer to the special temper of an age which combined a fervent patriotism with a respect for tradition. It is well to remember that all the controversies which vexed England during that epoch of Civil War and Revolution were debated by reference to precedent, whilst the exuberant nationalism of the period coloured all its embattled disputes. The result was curious. On the one hand this immediate purpose gave the spur to a scholarly production of enduring value. But on the other hand the history of eleventh-century England became so denaturalised that even to-day it is hard to penetrate to the realities of eleventh-century history save through a haze of heated polemical vapour. The fathers had eaten sour

<sup>1</sup> See list of publications given in Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. Bliss, vol. iii, cols. 854-877.

<sup>2</sup> See *Spectator*, No. 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, first published in 1643.

grapes and the children's teeth were set on edge.

The nationalistic interpretation of the Norman Conquest which was later to find notable expressions in the work of Thierry<sup>1</sup> took from the start two contrasted forms. Some moved by the personal glory of the Norman kings found in their achievements the beginnings of British greatness. John Hayward in 1613 dedicated his book on the Conqueror and Henry I to the sons of James VI because (as he said) 'the persons of whom it treateth are those most worthy ancestors of yours who laid the foundations of this English Empire'.<sup>2</sup> For other reasons, Sir William Temple dilated on 'the happy circumstances of this famous Conquest',<sup>3</sup> and the comforting thought was powerfully reinforced by aristocratic prejudice. To assert descent from one who had fought for William at Hastings came very early to be almost a matter of course in any noble family. Elizabethan heralds—notably Gilbert Dethick—were at hand to supply the necessary evidence, and the claims did not cease to multiply. The Victorian poet might prefer kind hearts to coronets, but many of his contemporaries seem to have been eager to distil into their veins a synthetic mixture of Norman blood.<sup>4</sup> Although the names of less than forty of King William's followers at Hastings can be vouched by express testimony,<sup>5</sup> and although direct descent

<sup>1</sup> *Conquête d'Angleterre* (1825).      <sup>2</sup> 'Epistle Dedicatoire.'

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction to the History of England* (1695), pp. 313 *sqq.*

<sup>4</sup> On this matter see the twelve volumes of the *Ancestor* (1902-5).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Douglas, 'Companions of the Conqueror,' in *History*, vol. xxviii, pp. 129 *sqq.*

in the male line from any one of these would be very hard to establish, 'to have come over with the Conqueror' is a boast not entirely unknown to-day. Nor can this apparently harmless foible be wholly ignored by the historian. 'The ludicrous side of pedigree-making,' wrote that fine scholar, George Burnett, Lyon King of Arms, 'must not blind us to the graver consequences connected with it.'<sup>1</sup> It has certainly since the Elizabethan age cast a deceptive and illusory light on Anglo-Norman scholarship.

In such manner has the Norman Conquest been treated as a matter for patriotic pride. But the same preoccupation with nationalism led to an equally strained interpretation in the contrary sense. By many early writers the Norman Conquest was represented as a national tragedy and even as a national disaster. The note of regret which is strikingly absent in Rastell is to be heard already in Camden's *Britannia*,<sup>2</sup> and I have sometimes wondered whether here is the reason why one of the most dramatic episodes in the British story was not used by Shakespeare in his Histories. Be this as it may, when Winston Churchill, father of the first Duke of Marlborough, produced in 1685 his *Divi Britannici*, he paid tribute to those who fought against William as being

willing to be as they were then made immortal who bravely strove with Destiny to save their country from the calamity of foreign servitude.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Popular Genealogists; or the Art of Pedigree Making*, published anonymously in 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. 1772, vol. i, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> p. 187.

This conception, reproduced with endless reiteration during the ensuing generations and consecrated at last by popular novelists,<sup>1</sup> remains as probably the most widely-spread idea respecting the Norman Conquest to-day.

From the beginning, however, it entailed curious consequences. Propagated at a time when Puritanism was in the ascendant, it supplied the obvious occasion for a moral judgment. A well-known passage in the chronicle of William of Malmesbury<sup>2</sup> thus gave the opportunity to John Milton, who in his *History of Britain*<sup>3</sup> painted this picture of Anglo-Saxon society at the time of its downfall:

The great men given to Gluttony and dissolute Life, made a prey of the Common People . . . the meaner sort tipling together night and day, spent all they had in Drunkenness, attended with other Vices which effeminate men's minds. Whence it came to pass that carried on with fury and rashness more than any true fortitude or skill of War they gave to William their Conqueror so easie a Conquest.

This view, also, has been frequently reproduced. Sir Francis Palgrave found an explanation of the Norman Conquest in a degeneracy of the Anglo-Saxon character,<sup>4</sup> and at about the same time Thomas

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Kingsley, *Hereward the Wake* (1866); C. Macfarlane, *Camp of Refuge* (1887).

<sup>2</sup> *Gesta Regum*, ed. Stubbs (1889), vol. ii, p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. 1695 pp. 356, 357.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Collected Works*, vol. iii, p. 332. 'I am reading Palgrave,' wrote Stubbs, apparently with reference to this passage, 'and am sorry to say I do not believe in him' (*Letters*, p. 105).

Carlyle re-echoed Milton with ringing emphasis. Without the Normans, he cried:

What had it ever been? A gluttonous race of Jutes and Angles capable of no grand combinations; lumbering about in pot-bellied equanimity; not dreaming of heroic toil and silence and endurance such as leads to the high places of this universe, and the golden mountain tops where dwell the spirits of the dawn.<sup>1</sup>

As applied to the race which in 1066 fought the battles of Fulford and Stamford Bridge, and which some eighty years before gave perfect expression to the heroic spirit in the Maldon Poem, Carlyle's judgment can perhaps best be excused by the fact that it was not original. National disasters have, however, a way of inspiring the rhetoric of political moralists, and, as we have recently observed in France, men discover very readily in such calamities an expiation of national sin.

From regarding the Norman Conquest as a national humiliation, it was but a step to explain it away. At a very early date, therefore, it was in some quarters held to be more decent to speak of the Norman 'acquisition', or even of the Norman 'purchase' of England.<sup>2</sup> A veritable social contract could be postulated between the Conqueror and a lady described as 'Britannia', 'his sacred queen'.<sup>3</sup> This conception, too, has survived from

<sup>1</sup> *Frederick the Great*, vol. i, p. 415, quoted by Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, vol. i, ed. 1891, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Spelman, *Glossarium Archæologicum*, in voce 'Conquestum' (ed. 1664, p. 145).

<sup>3</sup> *Argumentum Anti-Normannicum* (1682).

the seventeenth century in a continued effort to regard the period of Norman and Angevin rule in England as a kind of interruption—as an unproductive interlude—in our national story. ‘For nearly two centuries after the Norman Conquest’, asserts the writer of a deservedly popular manual, ‘there is no history of the English people’,<sup>1</sup> and he goes on to liken the rule of the Normans in England to that of the English in India. England, it is elsewhere suggested, as a result of a ‘wave of barbarian immigration’, then passed under ‘foreign kings’;<sup>2</sup> but these and all they represented disappeared, at some unspecified date, and the waking life of the nation was then resumed once more. ‘A man may end’, wrote G. K. Chesterton, ‘by maintaining that the Norman Conquest was a Saxon Conquest.’<sup>3</sup> He was scarcely exaggerating.

By such devious routes did William the Conqueror descend into the arena of seventeenth-century politics, and in so doing he became the especial enemy of the Whigs. If he was justly to be stigmatised as a foreign tyrant, then the lessons of his life must surely be brought home to the discontented subjects of the Stuart kings. The controversies of the Oxford Parliament were thus embellished by a documented diatribe against the first Norman King, which quoted Coke that it was neither ‘ingenious or prudent for Englishmen to deprave their birth-

<sup>1</sup> A. F. Pollard, *The History of England* (Home University Library), pp. 31–3.

<sup>2</sup> Green, *Short History*. Cf. also *History* (1937), vol. xxii, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Orthodoxy* (1909), p. 126.

right', and concluded that 'the true honour of our worthy Saxon ancestors' should be supported.<sup>1</sup> This was in 1681. But soon the Whig historians were faced, as a result of the Revolution of 1688, by a perplexing problem. After all, there was a third William as well as a first, and both came from overseas. Here was food for uncomfortable reflexion! 'I propose', wrote John Toland in 1701

to deduce this argument from William the Norman to this very time . . . to undeceive those (or their adherents) who may think themselves injured by being set aside though they be next of kin.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for two decades after 1688 a certain discomfort appears in these writers, and with some cause. To display the Conqueror as a tyrant destroying ancient liberties, and at the same time to depict him as the prototype of William of Orange, the Great Deliverer, was a task which might well prove daunting. Yet during the latter years of the seventeenth century it was actually attempted—notably in 1695 in the work of Temple and his commentators.<sup>3</sup> But to explain 'what we gained by our loss in this Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Argumentum Anti-Normannicum* (1682), p. cliii.

<sup>2</sup> *Anglia Libera* (1701), p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction to the History of England* (1695), especially pp. 302–317. The ingenuity of this most plausible piece of special pleading challenges admiration, and it was perhaps natural for Bishop William Nicolson, who did so much to stabilize the Revolution settlement in the North, to observe (see *English Historical Library*, ed. 1736, p. 76) that 'he makes such Reflections as become a Statesman and a Person so conversant in the Management of publick Affairs'.

quest'<sup>1</sup> proved at last too much for ingenuity even of the Whig historians, and in 1714 John Fortescue Aland succinctly stated what was henceforth to be orthodox Whig doctrine in this matter.

Should we allow our laws to have an uncertain Original, he wrote, I fear that some people would of themselves fix their original from William the First and . . . I don't know what ill use the Champions of Absolute monarchy may be inclined to make of such a Concession.<sup>2</sup>

Yet another idea respecting the Norman Conquest was thus at length hatched out of contemporary controversy. It was seemly—it might even be useful—to depict William as a tyrant, but if proper point was to be given to the story, it was necessary to assume the nation which he subdued to have been imbued with Protestant sympathies, and to have been possessed of democratic, or at least of Whig, institutions. What a lesson for posterity, if a people so admirably disposed could be sadly shown to have succumbed in 1066 to the combined forces of Popery and Absolutism! The attempt was made. As early as the time of Elizabeth, Matthew Parker had sponsored a great movement in Anglo-Saxon scholarship in the hope that he might find in the Old English church a prototype of the reformed Establishment over which he was called to preside. 'This is no small satisfaction', wrote a later scholar in 1709, 'that we reap from Saxon Learning that

<sup>1</sup> Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 313. He adds, not without reason: 'it seems a contradiction'.

<sup>2</sup> *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy* (1714), p. xv.

we see the Agreement of the reformed and the ancient Saxon church'.<sup>1</sup> But for the analogy to be made effective it had to be pressed more particularly on its secular side, and in this manner there was prepared in a long series of books the still familiar picture of Anglo-Saxon society as consisting of communities of freemen legislating for themselves in democratic committees which in the last resort could elect and depose their kings. The wheel had at last turned full circle. William the Conqueror is no longer the founder of British greatness: he has become the subverter of the British constitution. The Anglo-Saxons whom he overthrows are no longer a race of drink-sodden degenerates, but the fit forbears of those who wrought the Glorious Revolution.

The posthumous career of William the Conqueror in English letters is almost as remarkable as his actual career in British history. Nevertheless this long-sustained interest in the Norman conquest was productive not only of an ebullient polemic, but also of profound erudition, and it will be an object of this lecture to recall attention to this neglected learning. Nor were there wanting some writers

<sup>1</sup> E. Elstob, *English-Saxon Homily* (1709), p. xiv. The political implications of this in relation to the Norman Conquest are stressed by Lord Lyttleton in his *History . . . of Henry II* (ed. 1767, vol. i, pp. 10 *sqq.*). Lingard (*History of England*, ed. 1835, vol. ii, p. 8, note) protested effectively against this notion. 'I am aware,' he wrote, 'that this account is very different from that which is generally given in which Stigand appears to act the part of a patriot, and the success of William is attributed to the influence of the Bishops unwilling to offend the Pope.'

who in this matter did strive after objectivity. Thus Sharon Turner, albeit with imperfect equipment, sought to represent the Saxons as they were and not as they ought to have been,<sup>1</sup> and John Lingard, in writing his admirable account of the Norman Conquest, avowedly in the first instance applied himself only to original authorities in the expressed hope that he might thereby be enabled to avoid copying the mistakes of others.<sup>2</sup> Such conscious attempts at detachment were, however, rare,<sup>3</sup> and public opinion was slow to change. In general, it is true to say that William the Conqueror, who in the time of the Stuarts became a combative figure in English party politics, continued to remain so in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Then Edward Freeman came.

Between 1867 and 1879 Edward Augustus Freeman produced in five large octavo volumes each containing over seven hundred pages the most elaborate history of the Norman Conquest which has ever been compiled. A disciple of Dr. Arnold, he was himself a product of the nineteenth century revival of historical studies, and with a clear-cut conception of history he brought to his task rare

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799-1805), esp. vols. iii and iv.

<sup>2</sup> See the fine passage in his preface (*History of England*, vol. i, ed. 1835, p. iv). Compare also M. Haile and E. Bonney, *Life and Letters of John Lingard* (n.d.), p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> It was, however, with some exaggeration that J. R. Green (cf. *History*, vol. xxviii, p. 88) described Roscoe's *William the Conqueror* (1846) as 'the most worthless biography in the English language'.

qualities of mind and character. He had tireless energy, a fine sense of historical topography,<sup>1</sup> and a knowledge of the narrative sources of Anglo-Saxon history which has rarely been equalled. Thus equipped, he set out to tell the story of the Norman Conquest down to the ultimate detail, and it is little wonder that he produced a remarkable book. The fact needs emphasis. As a detailed narrative of the Norman Conquest, Freeman's book has never been superseded, and it is those best versed in the history of eleventh-century England who are most conscious of its value.

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether any work of comparable importance in English historical literature has ever been more easy to criticize than Freeman's *Norman Conquest*. It was in Green's phrase 'far too rhetorical and diffuse',<sup>2</sup> and yet despite its excessive length, it concentrated too exclusively upon strictly political events. Nor was the treatment of the authorities itself comprehensive, so that a generation which has been taught to value the record sources of history, and which pays perhaps even an excessive reverence to material which has not yet been printed, is inevitably sceptical of an historian who neglected records, who misinterpreted Domesday Book, and who positively boasted his contempt for manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Freeman was, in fact,

<sup>1</sup> His *Sketches of a Tour in Normandy and Maine*, published posthumously in 1897, is a wholly admirable commentary on Anglo-Norman history.

<sup>2</sup> Green to Dawkins, 2 Feb. 1869 (*Letters*, p. 226).

<sup>3</sup> See *Quarterly Review*, June 1892, p. 29.

more erudite than critical, and even the narrative sources which were the sure foundation of his work were sometimes by him mishandled. Generally, as J. R. Green remarked,<sup>1</sup> he tended to be unjust to the Norman writers, but otherwise he often gives the impression of giving equal credence to all his authorities and of blending together their contradictory accounts into an unreal synthesis. In this way his account of the crisis of 1051-1052 is, for instance, incomprehensibly confused.<sup>2</sup> It must, moreover, be added that, having made up his mind, he could show a most obstinate bias towards his sources, selecting only those which could best illustrate his point of view. His famous battle-picture of Hastings was itself vitiated by being so largely derived from the *Roman de Rou* of Wace.<sup>3</sup>

Freeman's *Norman Conquest* was, in short, magisterial without being definitive, and the book which might have been expected to induce a calmer temper into Anglo-Norman studies had paradoxically precisely the opposite effect. The reasons for this were personal as well as public. Besides being a sincere historian, Freeman was also a brutal controversialist, and he was at the same time himself unduly sensitive to criticism.<sup>4</sup> Such a man should not present him-

<sup>1</sup> Green to Freeman, 19 August, 1868 (*Letters*, p. 197).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. Wilkinson (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. xxii, pp. 368-387).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 322 *sqq.*; Douglas in *History*, vol. xxviii, pp. 131, 132.

<sup>4</sup> According to his friend Canon Venables, 'he sometimes manifested an intolerance which was not always kept within the bounds

self as a target to his enemies. This Freeman did.. His critics thereupon advanced to the attack with an outraged acerbity, and his friends replied by defending him where he was least defensible.<sup>1</sup> The prolonged controversy<sup>2</sup> which ensued was conducted by both sides with an astonishing lack of generosity,<sup>3</sup> and it is now chiefly memorable as having provoked the constructive criticism of John Horace Round. Round was to influence Anglo-Norman scholarship for a generation, but it is none the less permissible to deplore the manner in which his fine erudition was here utilized to give point to a personal attack. Concerned without restraint to demolish the scholarly reputation of his chief opponent, he was so far successful as unduly to diminish Freeman's posthumous fame. The man who had dealt out small justice and less courtesy to Froude thus himself received scant justice from posterity. It is unfortunate, however, that to-day most undergraduates should

of courtesy, and was painful to his victims and distressing to others'. For an effective protest against his controversial methods see H. Paul, *Life of Froude* (1905), pp. 147-198.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 322 sqq., etc.

<sup>2</sup> The extent of this controversy can be judged by the long bibliography given in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol. xliii. The discourtesy of the disputants can only be judged after a perusal of what they wrote.

<sup>3</sup> Was it really necessary to print a savage attack (*Quarterly Review*, June 1892) upon Freeman within three months of Freeman's death? Round seems subsequently to have stated that he wrote this at some previous time (cf. Memoir by W. Page in Round, *Family Origins*, 1930, p. xxvi), but if so, the Editor of the *Quarterly* would appear to have taken his responsibilities lightly.

know of Freeman only through the writings of his embittered critics. It would be still more unfortunate if he were to be finally judged by means of some facile caricature<sup>1</sup> made of one who can justly be claimed as an Eminent Victorian—that is to say, a distinguished man in a most distinguished age.

There is little doubt, however, that as the historian of the Norman Conquest, Freeman developed many of the worst elements of the tradition he inherited. He, too, like his predecessors, treated the eleventh-century struggle almost as a matter of present politics and judged it accordingly. A militant Teutonist, he declared that he would gladly have fought against William at Hastings, and he specifically described William's opponents as the 'patriotic leaders' of the 'national party'.<sup>2</sup> In one respect, indeed, he carried these preoccupations a stage further. Many previous writers had compiled as history a political polemic against the Conqueror, but usually they had done this not in the interests of Godwin and Harold, Earls of Wessex, but in those of Edgar Atheling.<sup>3</sup> For Sir William Temple, Harold was 'perfidious and insolent';<sup>4</sup> for Mat-

<sup>1</sup> Lytton Strachey, *Portraits in Miniature* (1931), pp. 199–203.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii *passim*; G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (1913), p. 348.

<sup>3</sup> *The Hereditary Right of the Crown of England Asserted* (1713), a non-juring publication, defends William as 'the only person capable of defeating the Designs of Harold' (p. 29), and this view is strongly reflected in Hume's *History of England*.

<sup>4</sup> *Introduction to the History of England* (1695), p. 105.

threw Hale a 'usurper';<sup>1</sup> William's title, observed Blackstone, was 'altogether as good as Harold's'.<sup>2</sup> In his glorification of Godwin and Harold, Freeman certainly had some predecessors, and in particular he had read a popular novel by Lord Lytton.<sup>3</sup> But it was left to Freeman authoritatively to present to the British public Godwin and Harold, Earls of Wessex, as the champions of English nationalism, as the enemies of priestcraft, and most strangely of all, as among the friends of Parliamentary government.<sup>4</sup>

Freeman's approach to his subject was in essentials not different from that of his predecessors; and as an historian of the Norman Conquest he belongs to an earlier tradition. Since his day, therefore, Anglo-Norman scholarship has been marked not so much by a development of his ideas as by a reaction from them. Modern research has tended to destroy at last the old notion which he popularised that the Norman Conquest was a national struggle, and it has questioned the very existence in 1066 of an English nation in the modern sense of the term. There are, it is true, certain remarks in the Anglo-

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Common Law* (ed. 1739), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (ed. 1785), p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> He refers specifically to Lytton's *Harold* in *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii (ed. 1870), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted how much more balanced is Green's estimate of these Earls of Wessex in his *Conquest of England* (1883). Mandell Creighton remarked, 'Freeman's worship of them is ridiculous. They were clearly ruffians' (Creighton to Mrs. J. R. Green, 31st Dec., 1883, printed *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton* (1904), i, p. 264.)

Saxon chronicles which indicate the occasional appearance of sentiments common to all England at this time,<sup>1</sup> but these found little expression in the politics of the period. England under Edward the Confessor showed small disposition to unite against the Normans; her political history was dominated by the rivalries of great earldoms; and her social structure was marked above all by the differences which continued to distinguish the several provinces of the late Old English state.<sup>2</sup> Godwin throughout his career acted primarily in the interests of his family, and Harold less than any of his immediate predecessors can be regarded as a national King. William the Conqueror on his side never had to face the resistance of a united England. He overcame separately a number of provinces, and in so doing he had a considerable measure of English support. Great English prelates such as Aldred of York and Wulfstan of Worcester showed little hostility to William's rule in England, and when the King in 1068 went to the West to suppress the Exeter rising there were already English soldiers in his army.<sup>3</sup>

The revulsion against a nationalistic treatment of

<sup>1</sup> *A.S. Chron.* 'C' and 'D', s.a. 1052; and cf. R. W. Chambers, 'Continuity of English Prose' (*Early English Text Soc.*, vol. 183).

<sup>2</sup> See Stenton, *Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw* (1910); Douglas, *Social Structure of Medieval East Anglia* (1927). Research has abundantly confirmed Green's acute comment to Freeman in 1869: 'What I am certain of is that up to the Norman Conquest these provincial divisions and provincial feelings played a far more important part than you historians have given them credit for' (*Letters of J. R. Green*, p. 220).

<sup>3</sup> *Orderic. Vitalis*, ed. Le Prevost, vol. 11, p. 180.

the Norman Conquest has been caused, moreover, not only by a more detached investigation of political events, but also by the impact upon English historical scholarship of a new range of studies. In the same year which saw the completion of Freeman's *Norman Conquest* there appeared in Denmark the first of the four volumes of Steenstrup's *Normannerne*. It was the beginning of a movement of research which had as its object a new assessment of the Scandinavian contribution to European growth in the Middle Ages. Stubbs saw at once that this might have a considerable bearing on English historical studies,<sup>1</sup> but the Oxford school seem to have been strangely reluctant to recognize the importance of what were described as 'lucubrations' in 'an unknown tongue'.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Scandinavian studies continued progressively to affect the interpretation of English history with consequences to be seen particularly in the agrarian and social investigations associated with the names of Maitland and Vinogradoff. Finally Professor Stenton in his *Danelaw Charters* and in his *Danes in England*, brought this Scandinavian learning into direct relation with English history, and his conclusions have more recently been reinforced by the systematic investigation of English place-names.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs to Mrs. J. R. Green, 29th March, 1883: 'There are clearly rising controversies (Steenstrup, etc.) on some of these Danish questions' (*Letters of William Stubbs*, p. 194).

<sup>2</sup> Stubbs to Macmillan, 9th Jan., 1883 (*Ibid.*, pp. 189, 190).

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the historical implications of the work of the English Place-Name Society on this question, see Stenton in *R. Hist. Soc. Trans.*, 4th Series, vol. xxiv, pp. 1-24.

A result of this work has been to place the history of England during the eleventh century in a new perspective. It is now realized that the consequences of earlier Scandinavian settlements in this country endured until the Norman Conquest. The Anglo-Saxon annals of the reign of Edward the Confessor show how constant was the threat that a Scandinavian dynasty might be restored in England, and there can be little doubt that such a restoration would have been welcomed through large areas of the country. When in 1070 men from a raiding Danish fleet took refuge in north Lincolnshire they joined naturally in the festivals of the countryside,<sup>1</sup> and Domesday Book reveals clearly that in 1086 the region formerly comprised in the Danelaw still retained many features characteristic of Scandinavia. It was therefore entirely in keeping with earlier history, and with its results, that the great crisis of 1066 should have been marked not only by the advent of William from Normandy, but also by a great Scandinavian invasion led by Harold Hardraada, King of Norway. The political significance of the Norman Conquest can no longer be sought in a struggle between 'English' and 'Normans'. It must be found in a triangular contest between a Norman Duke, a Norwegian King and a West Saxon Earl, as a result of which it would be determined whether for the remainder of the Middle Ages the development of England would be linked up with the Scandinavian north or with Latin Europe.

If the political interpretation of the Norman Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Orderic. Vitalis*, ed. Le Prevost, vol. ii, p. 194.

quest has thus been altered by modern scholarship, even more drastic has been the change in the assessment of its social consequences. In 1891 and 1892 John Horace Round, in two notable articles which were subsequently reprinted in his *Feudal England*,<sup>1</sup> contended that English feudalism was, in its essential military arrangements, a creation of the Normans in England. The Anglo-Norman knight was henceforth to be distinguished sharply, both as to status and obligations, from the Anglo-Saxon thegn, and the feudal organization to which he belonged owed little or nothing to Anglo-Saxon precedent.<sup>2</sup> Such a theory ran counter to what was then accepted teaching, for it was then strange doctrine to derive English feudalism not from the Saxon past, but from arrangements made by the Conqueror after his coming to England.<sup>3</sup> It was Round's achievement to emphasize the revolutionary importance of the contracts made between the Conqueror and his tenants-in-chief, whereby the latter in return for

<sup>1</sup> pp. 225-317.

<sup>2</sup> For subsequent developments of criticisms of Round's theory, see Stenton, *English Feudalism* (1932), and in particular Chap. IV. Modifications of the doctrine now current are suggested in Douglas, *Feudal Documents* (1932), pp. xcv-c, and in *Domesday Monachorum* (1944), pp. 59-63.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman voiced opinions which would not have been gainsaid by Gneist or Stubbs when he observed (*Norman Conquest*, vol. v, ed. 1876, p. 372): 'There is no ground for thinking that William directly or systematically introduced any new kind of tenure into the holding of English lands.' For parallel passages in the writings of other contemporary historians, see Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 261, 262.

their land performed military service to the King with a specified number of knights; and it was in 1891 no less startling to suggest that the number of knights actually enfeoffed with land was determined by the tenant-in-chief at his pleasure, and bore no fixed relation either to the amount of service he owed or to the extent of the land he held.

Round's theory of knight-service is now the property of Macaulay's schoolboy, and he stated it with such combative emphasis that it is now always, and properly, associated with his name. But to the historian of English scholarship it is interesting to observe that the revolutionary doctrine which Round propounded in 1891 had been clearly stated in both its parts before the death of Charles I.<sup>1</sup> Henry Spelman, for instance, had been well aware that the feudal consequences of the Norman Conquest were cataclysmatic. 'Touching tenures in capite,' he remarked, 'I think I may boldly assert that there were none in England in the Saxons' time.'<sup>2</sup> Even the second and more original part of Round's theory had been neatly summed up in a more obscure tract of Sir Robert Bruce Cotton, which in 1657 was published among his posthumous papers:

To supply his occasions of men money or provisions—wrote Cotton—the Conqueror ordered that all those that enjoyed

<sup>1</sup> It must be emphasized that Round himself paid proper tribute to 'old views of the subject', but it may perhaps be doubted whether he fully realized the extent to which he had been anticipated by seventeenth-century writers. The name neither of Henry Spelman nor of Robert Bruce Cotton is to be found in the index to *Feudal England*.

<sup>2</sup> *Reliquiae Spelmannianae* (ed. Gibson, 1698), p. 10.

any fruit of his Conquest should hold their lands proportionably by so many knights fees of the Crown, *and admitted them to infeoff their followers with such part as they pleased of their own portions.*<sup>1</sup>

In explaining the feudal results of the Conquest, Round was in fact restating a theory which in its most essential implications had been held by scholars early in the seventeenth century, but which had been overlaid by a long tradition of misconception.

As a consequence judgement on a considerable portion of British constitutional history has been affected. It is hardly unfair to suggest that Freeman and many of his contemporaries strove to introduce into Saxon England the beginnings of Parliamentary democracy. 'We must recognize,' he writes, 'the spirit which dictated the Petition of Right as the same which gathered all England round the banners of the returning Godwin, and remember that the "good old cause" is truly that for which Harold died on the field, and Waltheof on the scaffold.'<sup>2</sup> We are asked to note of Godwin that 'his eloquent tongue could not always *command a majority* in the Witan',<sup>3</sup> and to contemplate 'the fluctuations of success and defeat which he underwent in the great deliberative assembly'. 'We shall have to pass over several centuries,' concludes Freeman, 'before we come to another chief whose influence so clearly rests to so great a degree on his

<sup>1</sup> *Cottoni Posthuma*, ed. 1672, p. 14 (my italics).

<sup>2</sup> See *Life and Letters of E. A. Freeman*, vol. i, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii (1870), p. 35 (my italics).

power of swaying great assemblies of men, or the personal affection or personal awe with which he learned to inspire the 'Legislature of the country.'<sup>1</sup> We shall indeed: for here in the eleventh century has been placed something very like a Victorian Parliament, and the phrases which describe Godwin, Earl of Wessex, could be applied without qualification and with greater truth to William Ewart Gladstone.

It has been a task of modern students of English feudalism not only to criticize the essential anachronism of such descriptions, but also and particularly to insist that at the Conquest there was a radical break in constitutional continuity. After the Conquest they would suggest the Witan was replaced by an assembly formed according to radically different principles—a feudal *curia* consisting essentially of the King's tenants-in-chief, and it was out of this *curia* that Parliament eventually grew. Nor were the Commons—'the assembled people of England'—in any sense a part of this *curia* until the thirteenth century, and their first appearance therein is in the capacity of petitioners. Such a conception of Parliamentary growth popularized by Professor Pollard<sup>2</sup> and G. B. Adams<sup>3</sup> has now become a common-place. But it, too, for all its

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* He here quotes Lytton with approval: 'when the chronicler praises the gift of speech, he unconsciously proves the existence of constitutional freedom'. This makes strange reading to-day.

<sup>2</sup> *e.g. Evolution of Parliament* (1920).

<sup>3</sup> *e.g. Origin of the English Constitution* (1920).

modernity, had been stated in a more distant past. When in 1694 Robert Brady produced his *Introduction to the History of England*, he had been careful to observe that before the thirteenth century:

the Body of the Commons of England or Freemen collectively taken had not any share or votes in making of laws for the Government of the Kingdom unless they were represented by tenants in capite.<sup>1</sup>

This view would have shocked most Victorian historians, but it would hardly be disputed to-day.

Its final corollary is, however, being more slowly accepted. It is now generally recognized that the Norman *Curia Regis* was a feudal body formed to assist the King in the government of his realm, and that no part of its functions was to act as a constitutional check on the royal power. Nevertheless, the old Whig notion of Anglo-Norman history as a perpetual struggle between Legislature and Executive dies hard. Even Round was sometimes inclined to view the Norman aristocracy mainly as supplying elements of resistance to the Crown. But in truth the Norman magnates who surrounded William had no constitutional right, and can have felt little personal desire, to limit the Conqueror's power. Round's own fundamental researches, and the intensive study of private charters more recently undertaken by Professor Stenton,<sup>2</sup> have revealed how much the feudal settlement of England owed

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Old English History* (1694), Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Notably in his *Documents illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw* (1920), and most particularly in his *English Feudalism* (1932).

to the activities of the great Norman families. There was always, it is true, a danger of rebellions such as those which occurred in 1075 and 1102, and the disputed succession which ensued after 1135 provoked a disastrous civil war. But it was none the less essential to the survival of this small Norman aristocracy that it should co-operate in large measure with the Norman kings in the governance of England, and it is misleading to interpret the history of Norman England in the light of the constitutional crisis of the seventeenth century. All political systems when they are operative tend to exhibit a certain balance or tension which is very real, but the dominant theme of Anglo-Norman history is probably to be found not so much in an opposition between 'Crown' and 'Baronage', as in the re-organisation of England upon a feudal plan by a very able group of men with the King at their head.

It was largely owing to this co-operation that the Norman Conquest affected so vitally the future growth of the British constitution. So thorough, however, had been the recognition of the benefits conferred upon England by Anglo-Norman administration that this appreciation has even tended in some quarters to obscure the high qualities of the vernacular civilization which almost perished at the Conquest. As early as 1830 a Danish scholar, Grunvig, roundly declared:

The creation of the modern civilized world . . . will never be understood without a familiar acquaintance with those Anglo-Saxons of whom it has hitherto been held that no gentleman could wish to be introduced to them. . . . From the begin-

ning of the eighth century—he continues—to the end of the eleventh (England) appears . . . to have been the most truly civilized country on the globe.<sup>1</sup>

Such sentiments (whatever their value) found little support in England during the ensuing decades, and even the Teutonism of the dominant Oxford historical school did not inspire its most prominent members to attempt any close investigation of Anglo-Saxon literature. The more recent movement of Anglo-Saxon linguistic studies has, however, led some of its foremost exponents to echo Grunvig's complaint that historians now pay too much attention to what the Normans created and too little to what they destroyed. Here suggests Professor Chadwick is 'the great defect of our historical education'—that the early history of this country has come down to us 'mainly through a Norman French tradition'.<sup>2</sup>

No-one who has examined the Whig interpretations of the Norman Conquest dominant in this country for over two hundred years will be inclined to think that these were marked by any notable French bias, but it is still necessary to insist that an appreciation of what the Norman accomplished in England need involve no disparagement of the Anglo-Saxon achievement. In agriculture, in the local courts of shire and hundred, in the connexion of these with the monarchy, in a long legislative tradition, and in many other ways the work of

<sup>1</sup> See R. W. Chambers, *Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *The Study of Anglo-Saxon* (1941), p. 27.

the older order was to survive into the new age. Moreover, although there can be little doubt that England was politically decadent in 1066, this decadence had not as yet seriously affected the civilisation which the Saxons had produced but which they could no longer defend. The real weakness of Freeman's treatment of the Norman Conquest was in no sense that he over-praised Anglo-Saxon culture, but rather that he championed the Old English state for the least admirable of its features. But Round, owing to his own imperfect acquaintance with that culture,<sup>1</sup> never brought this criticism home to his chief opponent, and as a consequence the controversy tended to miss the chief point at issue. As Mr. Sisam has demonstrated,<sup>2</sup> England in the eleventh century was continuing to produce with great energy a vernacular literature not to be paralleled in contemporary Europe.

This literary output was by the Norman Conquest brought to an untimely end, and perhaps for that reason students of Saxon literature have often found it difficult to approach the events of the eleventh century with critical detachment. 'Thanks be to God,' exclaimed William Lisle in 1623, 'that he that conquered the land could not so conquer the

<sup>1</sup> Round complained of Freeman's 'almost frantic prejudice' (*Peerage and Family History* (1901), p. 7), but the man who could refer (*Feudal England*, p. 318) to the 'arid entries in our jejune national chronicle' can hardly have approached with critical detachment the magnificent account given by the Anglo-Saxon chronicles of the reign of Edward the Confessor.

<sup>2</sup> *Review of English Studies*, vol. vii, p. 7; vol. viii, p. 51; vol. ix, x, p. 1.

language,'<sup>1</sup> and although his successors in linguistic study seem sometimes to disagree about the manner in which our language was transmitted to us, they seldom fail to share Lisle's pious gratitude for this limitation of the Norman Conquest. It, however, would be unfortunate if to-day a notable advance in a related field of studies were allowed to revive the special forms of nationalistic anachronism which have for so long disfigured Anglo-Norman historical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the two greatest achievements of medieval England were Anglo-Saxon vernacular culture and Anglo-Norman executive administration. I plead that now it should surely be possible to do justice to both without distorting the critical decades which divided them.

The extent to which recent studies in Old English have affected the interpretation of the Norman Conquest can be seen in the work of its greatest living historian. In 1908 Professor Stenton published his *William the Conqueror*: in 1943 he issued his definitive study of *Anglo-Saxon England*, wherein by carrying the story down to 1086 he included the best short account of the Norman Conquest which has ever been written. No-one of the numerous company who have benefited, and who will continue to benefit, by both these remarkable books can fail

<sup>1</sup> *Saxon Treatise* (1623), Preface.

<sup>2</sup> The militant nationalism which coloured the remarks of Professor Chambers about the Norman Conquest (see *Early Engl. Text Soc.*, vol. 183) is probably in this sense to be regretted, and the same attitude towards the Conquest may be detected even in Professor Chadwick's *Study of Anglo-Saxon*, particularly at pp. 25-7.

to observe in the latter a greater emphasis on the value and persistence of Anglo-Saxon tradition. In 1943 Professor Stenton concluded:

The Normans who entered into the English inheritance were a harsh and violent race. They were the closest of all western peoples to the barbarian strain in the continental order. They had produced little in art or learning and nothing in literature that could be set beside the work of Englishmen. But politically they were the masters of their world.<sup>1</sup>

The judgement is perhaps harsh. But it may well prove decisive.

If in the future it is modified to any appreciable degree, this will probably come about from an increasing knowledge of Norman history. Far less is known of pre-Conquest Normandy than of pre-Conquest England, and the result has been doubly unfortunate. Some scholars, faced by this lack of available information, have been eager hastily to deny to a province about which so little is known any formative influence on English growth. Others, less cautious, have sometimes been tempted to derive from pre-Conquest Normandy institutions and ideas whose operation has hitherto only been watched in English documents of a later date.

The great tendency—wrote W. H. Stevenson in 1896—to ascribe to the pre-Conquest Normans the organization of later times and to exaggerate their civilization would be checked if it were more generally realized how exceedingly slight is the information that has come down to us as to their legal, fiscal, military and other organizations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943), p. 678.

<sup>2</sup> *English Historical Review*, vol. xi, p. 733.

The complaint in 1896 was probably justified, and even to-day, after the more recent work of Haskins,<sup>1</sup> it can be defended.

Nevertheless, it would be rash to endorse the opinion now widely current that this lack of information about the early history of Normandy is due to lack of material for its study. The history of Normandy in the earlier half of the eleventh century is illustrated by a contemporary chronicler of good standing, and by numerous narratives of a later date, one of which is of very high quality. It is illustrated also by a series of charters comparable in character, and when the relative size of the Kingdom and the Duchy is considered, comparable even in number, with the magnificent series of *diplomata* which have been made to illuminate the last century of Anglo-Saxon history. It deserves considerable emphasis that there are extant and in print not less than nineteen charters of Duke Richard II covering the period 1006-1026; that for the period 1027-1035 there are likewise available nearly as many charters of Duke Robert I; and that numerous similar documents exist for the Norman reign of William the Conqueror. A large number of private charters relating to Norman history between 1000 and 1066 have also been published. Such is the printed material. It is certain, moreover, that in the

<sup>1</sup> In particular, *Norman Institutions* (1918). This is a notable book, but it is probably too soon to state (cf. Stenton, *English Feudalism*, p. 11) that 'unless discoveries of which there seems little prospect are still to be made, it is unlikely that future work on early Norman society will do more than supplement the outline which Professor Haskins has laid down'.

*archives* of Normandy, and particularly in those of Seine Inférieure, there remain happily unscathed large stores of still unprinted documents. It is premature to assert that all this evidence could not be used to elucidate the quality of the Norman influence on England. If little is known of the Normans before the Normans invaded England, it should not be assumed that this lack of knowledge is inevitable.

The comparative ignorance which prevails respecting early Norman history may be caused not so much by paucity of material as by the fact that this material has not as yet been adequately studied. The investigation of Norman antiquities conducted in the seventeenth century by André Duchesne and J. F. Pommeraye inspired no such company of successors as did in England the work of their contemporaries Spelman and Dugdale. The study of Norman history has until recently in France often been left in the hands of local investigators, sometimes of limited competence,<sup>1</sup> whilst in England this same study has usually been undertaken not for its own sake, but in a perfunctory manner as a prelude to the serious examination of some specifically English problem. As a result, much of the Norman material still remains, in point of criticism, in much the same condition as was the contemporary English

<sup>1</sup> As notable exceptions to this tendency must be mentioned the productions of the Chair of Norman History established in the University of Caen. Historical scholarship is indebted to its distinguished holders, such as Professor Contamine and the late Professor Prentout.

evidence in the middle of the eighteenth century. Thus even the ducal charters have never been made the object of systematic collection such as in England was undertaken by Kemble, and these instruments which often explain each other are mainly to be found obscurely scattered in many various publications that are not easily accessible even to French students. Before it can be utilized the vast bulk of this valuable material, both printed and unprinted, will need to be subjected to a far more searching criticism than it has as yet received. Points of chronology, authenticity, and especially of topography, which in English texts of similar date and comparable importance have usually received competent investigation, in the Norman documents very often still await elucidation.

Here, then, it may be suggested is an important field of research, which has up to now been only very imperfectly explored. He who should attempt its investigation will undoubtedly find himself faced by many intractable problems such as are usually associated with pioneer work. But if the guides are not very numerous, some of them are unusually distinguished. The labours of Stapleton and Round in England, of Haskins in America, of Gerville, Le Prévost and Charles de Beaurepaire in France have, for instance, prepared much of the ground, and there is clearly room here for close co-operation between English and French historians. Most important of all is the fortunate fact that one of the greatest medievalists of the modern France devoted so much of his tireless energy to investigating the antiquities

of his native province.<sup>1</sup> If the story of the 'Rise of Normandy' should ever be told, its telling will owe more to Leopold Delisle than to any other single man. And that chapter of still unwritten history will contribute directly to a better understanding of the Norman Conquest of England.

To survey a long movement of controversial scholarship in the course of a single lecture is in truth a hazardous undertaking, but I hope you will not think it has been presumptuous or wholly profitless. It may even have suggested to you certain general reflexions. The Norman Conquest, by being so long an issue almost of contemporary politics, was studied with a consistent zeal which would otherwise have been lacking, but as a consequence this eleventh-century crisis has been strangely and erroneously presented in terms of modern nationalism of Whig theory, or Protestant fervour, and nineteenth-century liberalism. The shadow of polemic has hung heavily over these studies, and we are even now only tardily escaping from the consequent anachronisms. To-day, indeed, it is even possible that the very effort at detachment may subject us to a new danger. The careful display of erudition which so often characterizes the modern monograph is wasted if the theme be insignificant, and if its treatment is such as to quench interest.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Lacombe, *Bibliographie des Travaux de M. Leopold Delisle* (1902). The fine appreciation of Delisle by R. L. Poole is to be found in vol. v of the *Transactions of the British Academy* (1911). It was written by one of the very few men among Delisle's contemporaries who, as a medieval scholar, can be claimed to have ranked among his peers.

Certainly, the subject I have ventured to offer to you this afternoon should induce in us a respect for our predecessors. The work of Brady and Farley, for example, is still of immediate value; modern feudalists have still much to learn from Spelman; latter-day Saxonists still debate with similar sentiments the problems which once so profitably engaged the attention of Lisle and Wanley; and when the history of pre-Conquest Normandy comes to be written, its basis will be the work of Delisle. Here, then, as I should like very diffidently to suggest, are obligations which it would become us more frequently to acknowledge, and here is an inheritance which it behoves us more assiduously to use. The vast literature of the Norman Conquest has placed at our disposal an accumulated erudition. For this very reason, that literature is not to be regarded merely as a curiosity of the past. It is a legacy to the present. It is an inspiration to the future. The modern student of medieval Britain is in very truth compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and our knowledge of the early history of our country may to-day be very substantially increased by paying reverent attention to the scholars of former centuries who laboured to teach us all.